



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

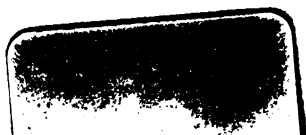
About Google Book Search

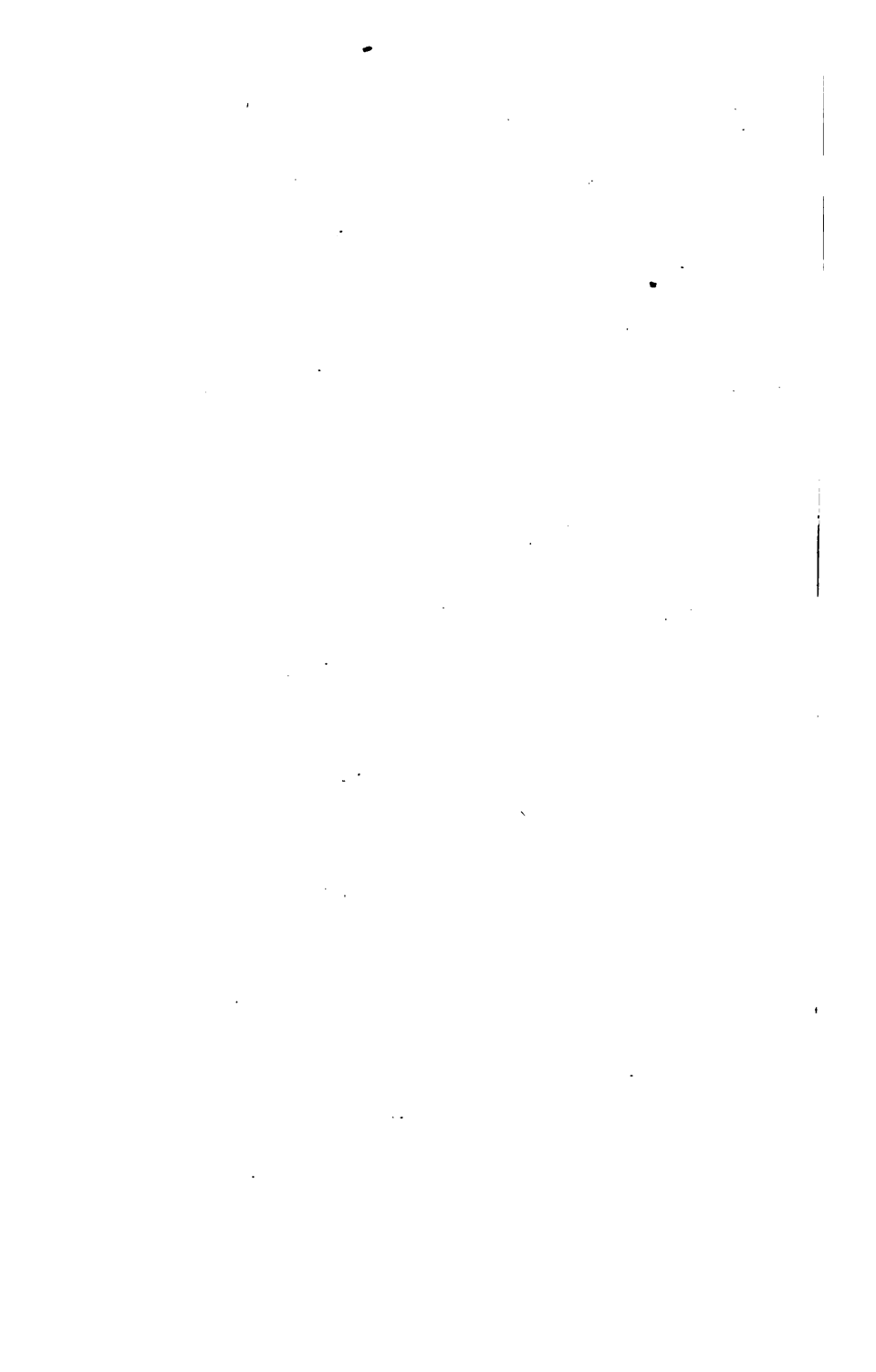
Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>





6000598982





MR. NEWBY'S NEW PUBLICATIONS.

In 1 vol., post 8vo., 10s. 6d.

THE LAW OF DIVORCE:

A TALE.

BY A GRADUATE OF OXFORD.

"While Belgravian mothers bewail the neglect of the holy rite of matrimony by young aristocrats, the same topic is treated from a totally opposite point of view, in a novel just published with the piquant title of 'The Law of Divorce.'"—*Liverpool Albion*.

"The arguments for and against the dissolubility of marriage are handled by the Oxford graduate with remarkable cleverness. Contrary to our expectation, a very thrilling and interesting story is interwoven with a subject which effects so deeply the welfare of society and the happiness of English homes."—*Globe*.

In 1 vol., post 8vo., price 10s. 6d.

BEYOND THE ORANGE RIVER;

OR, SCENES IN SOUTHERN AFRICA.

"All those who have read Chailu's 'Equatorial Africa' will be equally pleased with the scenes in Southern Africa depicted in 'Beyond the Orange River.'"—*Globe*.

MR. NEWBY'S NEW PUBLICATIONS.

In 2 vols., post 8vo.

MAY-BLOSSOM:

BEING PASSAGES FROM THE FIRST YEARS OF THE WEDDED
LIFE OF EVERARD GREY, ESQ., BARRISTER-AT-LAW.

BY AUSTYN GRAHAM,

Author of "The Parson and the Poor."

"This tale comes at a most genial season. Like our hedge-rows and flower gardens, Austyn Graham brings his choice garland to our domestic hearth, hopeful, consoling, and invigorating."—*Sun*.

In 2 vols., post 8vo., price 21s.

OUT OF HER ELEMENT.

DRAWN FROM LIFE.

BY PEN AND INK.

"This 'pen and ink' picture of life is admirably sketched, admirably filled up, and admirably finished. The pencil of a Thackeray, or the artistic finish of a Lytton Bulwer, could not have produced more life-like pictures."—*Globe*.

"Written with force and clearness."—*Oriental Budget*.

CULVERLEY RISE:

A TALE.

BY JULIA CORNER,

AUTHOR OF

"THE BROTHERS BASSET," "HISTORIES OF ENGLAND, FRANCE,
SPAIN, SCOTLAND, IRELAND," &c., &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

T. CAUTLEY NEWBY,
30, WELBECK STREET, CAVENDISH SQUARE.

1861.

250. f. 143.



CULVERLEY RISE.

CHAPTER I.

It was one of those cold, gloomy days that so frequently occur even in the summer time in this uncertain climate of ours, sending our spirits down many degrees below zero, and making us feel miserable without any absolute cause. The sun had forgotten to rise that morning; the birds sat silent on the trees as if they saw nothing to rejoice at; a sharp cutting wind was blowing from the north, accompanied by that unpleasant moisture in the atmosphere, not

amounting to rain, but commonly known as a Scotch mist. The heavy sound of the church bells tolling a death knell, accorded well with the sombre aspect of the whole scene as a grand funeral procession was seen wending its way through the principal street of a large and populous country town not many miles from Liverpool. The hearse, draped with a rich covering of black velvet, bordered with white silk, which almost swept the ground, was overshadowed by a dense forest of sable plumes, and drawn by four superb horses, that seemed to move with a proud consciousness of the nodding feathers and costly trappings with which they were adorned. It was escorted by six outriders, bearing black banners, and was followed by several mourning coaches, filled, it might be presumed, with the nearest relatives and friends of the deceased. Then came a long line of carriages, displaying outwardly the symbols of a grief that found no echo within, being sent by their owners merely to swell the

empty parade as a matter of form and ceremony. Last of all, seated in humbler vehicles, or mounted on horseback, appeared a train of servants and rustics, the latter probably the tenants of him whose manes they followed, and all were habited in the livery of woe.

Altogether, it was one of those pompous spectacles which answer the purpose of proclaiming to the gaping crowd, that the inanimate piece of clay about to mingle again with the dust, whence it had sprung, occupied one of the high places of this world ere the spirit had taken flight to unknown regions, leaving its late tenement more worthless than the empty casket when the jewels are gone. "Whose funeral is it?" was the inquiry of those, who, prompted by idle curiosity rather than any more serious feeling, stopped for an instant in the pursuit of business, or pleasure, to gaze irreverently on the passing show; not one among them, perhaps, bestowing a serious thought on the common lot of humanity, though such re-

flections might naturally be awakened by the sight of a fellow mortal going to his final resting place.

The question, "Who is it?" had been many times repeated before a satisfactory answer was obtained; but, at length, an ostler belonging to the inn where the cavalcade had been drawn up, in order to pass with due solemnity through the town, gratified the public curiosity by making known that the deceased was Sir Lyttleton Cray, of Culverley Rise, a large estate in one of the northern counties of England. "Sir Lyttleton Cray!—Oh, he's dead, is he?" was the general rejoinder, spoken in a tone that seemed to imply—"Well, nobody 'll care much about that, I suppose," and having paid this tribute to the memory of the dead, the inquirer pursued his way. As the pageant moved onward in its proud array, a coffin, scarcely covered by the tattered pall thrown over it, and borne on the shoulders of four miserable looking men, passed along the footway, telling, in its silent course,

that another human being had "shuffled off this mortal coil," and was about to be consigned to his native element.

What a lesson to human vanity did the contrast between those two funeral trains present ! yet the dead could neither be exalted nor humbled by any external signs of that wide distinction which had marked their way through life, but must stand on as equal a footing before the immortal throne as if they had walked side by side while on earth, and had been alike honoured in their obsequies. Yet there was a time when they were as equal in the sight of men as they now were in the sight of God ; for they were brothers, born of the same parents, reared in the same home ; and if, in youth, one might have expected to soar above the other in his passage through this world, it was he whose humble bier was scarcely noticed by a passing glance, and whose obscure grave would be unmarked even by a simple stone to record his name—for he was the elder of the two.

The humble coffin was followed by a solitary mourner, enveloped in a threadbare mantle, the hood of which was disposed so as to conceal her face from the rude gaze of a troop of ragged children and idle persons of both sexes, such as usually form a part of the cortége on such occasions. Low, convulsive sobs might now and then be heard from beneath that poverty stricken veil, the eloquent signs of a grief unheeded by the multitude, for this was *only a parish* burial, and such mourners find but little sympathy amongst the worshippers of Mammon, that constitute so large a portion of the human race. It so happened that, at the very instant the unconscious brothers were passing each other, some slight impediment on the footpath obliged the bearers of the coffin to halt, and caused the lone one to look up with a wild, hurried glance, when her eyes rested for a moment on the plumed hearse and its mounted escort ; but it was only for a moment : the contrast was too painful to bear ; and, with a slight shudder, she drew

her hood still closer over her face, as if to shut out a sight that seemed to mock her misery ; yet, how little did she dream of the close affinity that had subsisted between the dead. How little did she imagine that the sumptuous carriage enshrouded with silk and velvet, contained the ashes of her nearest relative. The look, transient as it was, had not been wholly unobserved, and had elicited an exclamation of surprise from one of three gentlemen arrayed in long black cloaks and silken hat bands, who were seated in the first mourning coach, each holding in his right hand a white cambric handkerchief of the finest texture, an appendage that might have been dispensed with on the score of utility, although two of those personages were the sons, and the other the next of kin after them to the deceased baronet. The latter it was, who, forgetting for an instant the part he was acting, and startled, as it were, by a sudden unexpected ray of light, involuntarily uttered aloud—"What a beautiful creature !"

Scarcely had the words escaped his lips, when he became conscious of the impropriety of which he had been guilty, by meeting the scandalised looks of his companions; and, leaning back in the carriage, he assumed an air of determined gravity, but found some difficulty in suppressing a smile on perceiving that one of his demure relations had shuffled nearer to the window, and was turning his eyes surreptitiously towards the object that had called forth so indecorous a note of admiration from his thoughtless, impulsive cousin. But the stolen glances were in vain; that beautiful countenance did not again become visible, and the two processions, moving in different directions, were soon far apart.

Thirty years had elapsed since the two brothers thus summoned together, to render their account in another world, had last met in this, and, as they parted then, who could have imagined that their next meeting would have been such as it was this day? But it is well for us that *to-morrow* is ever a mys-

tery; that the shadow of Hope is always gliding before us, whilst Fate, in its stern reality, is hidden from our sight.

It was a pleasant spot where the poor man was laid to rest; a secluded nook of that old churchyard, close to a paling overgrown with wild honeysuckle, which perfumed the air, whilst a large drooping willow hung mournfully over the green mounds, like some sorrowing friend weeping tears of dew in the silence of the night.

The solemn rites were ended, and the reverend clergyman had withdrawn to another part of the cemetery, whither he was followed by the spectators, who were eager to witness a repetition of the same ceremonies; and the poor mourner was left alone to watch with streaming eyes and breaking heart the last act that was to separate her for ever from all she had to love in the world. "Oh, that they were going to lay me by his side!" she murmured, as the men performed their dismal task; but, when it was over, and they had departed, she knelt

down on the fresh turned sod, and clasping her hands over her bosom, humbly prayed that the Father of the Fatherless would help her to bear her burden with patience. Was it in answer to this prayer that a ray of sunshine broke through the clouds that had darkened the sky during that melancholy day, and streamed directly on her head? She did not see it, for her face was hidden and bent down almost to the earth, but it was the rainbow of promise in the cloud of her destiny, a bright token of future peace. She was still kneeling, motionless as a statue, when a hand was laid with no fairy touch on her shoulder, and a rough but friendly voice awakened her to the remembrance of her forlorn condition.

“My good child,” said the kind hearted monitor, “this will never do—the ground is damp, and I shall have you on my sick list if I suffer you to remain here. But you are not alone surely? Did nobody come with you?”

“Nobody,” she answered with some diffi-

culty, for the effort to speak nearly choked her.

“Shameful !” muttered the good man in an undertone, “to let this poor young thing come by herself on such an errand as this.” Then, speaking aloud, he said kindly—“Well, my dear, you must not stay any longer now ; take my arm, and I will see you safe back.”

She had risen from her knees at his bidding, and without a word passively suffered him to draw her arm through his, and lead her from the spot.

He was the parish doctor, an excellent man, who had paid as much attention to the deceased, during his last illness, as if he had received his guinea fee for every visit ; and he now felt deeply interested in the future fate of the bereaved daughter, so young and beautiful, knowing as he did that she was left alone without a friend or relative, to struggle with all the difficulties of extreme poverty. Mr. Thornton had lived long enough in the world to know that adversity

is not the passport to its favour, and from his inmost soul he pitied that fair young creature, who looked as little able to contend with its frowns as the lily of the field to bear up against the pelting of the pitiless storm.

Avoiding the main road, he led her back through the quiet fields, and in the pure benevolence of his heart endeavoured to divert her mind from the scene they had just left, by talking of the future in more cheering terms than the present circumstances seemed to justify; and he was, in fact, sincerely disposed to befriend her as far as he was able.

Yet what could he do—a country doctor with five children to provide for? He could only use his best endeavours to enlist the sympathies of others; and with this benevolent purpose in his mind, he spoke soothingly to the young girl, who listened to his encouraging words with silent gratitude, and was comforted.

From her earliest childhood Miriam had

loved her father with an affection almost amounting to idolatry. She was scarcely six years old when her mother died, therefore he had been everything to her—parent, instructor, friend, and constant companion—for he was a reserved, unsocial man, who seemed to have no sympathy with the rest of the world, nor to desire any society beyond that of his child, so that they had lived wholly for each other, and had never been separated even for a single day.

The devoted attachment between those two isolated beings had been strengthened by a fatality that entirely altered their relative positions, and formed a stronger link to knit their hearts together more fondly than before. The father, in consequence of a dangerous malady, from which he never perfectly recovered, became totally blind, and then it was that he felt the real blessing of a daughter's love. The loss of sight is, perhaps, one of the greatest misfortunes incident to human nature; yet there is a solace for every affliction, and the blind

man found a source of pleasure even in his blindness—a pleasure that none can know save those who become helpless and dependent on the loving kindness of a duteous child. His daughter was to him a ministering angel, a light in his darkness, the bright star that turned his night into day ; and while he felt the genial influence of filial affection, he was mercifully spared the pain of witnessing the many sacrifices made by that gentle girl for his sake. He did not see how the colour was gradually fading from her cheek ; he did not once suspect what privations she endured that he might not feel the pressure of want ; he did not behold the wretchedness of the abode to which an unforeseen calamity had obliged her to remove him, for she carefully concealed from his knowledge an adverse stroke of fortune that suddenly deprived them of their principal means of subsistence. Thus he had died in happy ignorance of the destitution to which they were brought, and it was a consolation to the hapless orphan in her sorrow to reflect

that if life had been continued to him for a much longer period, it would have been impossible to keep up the innocent deception that had saved him from much suffering.

The unfortunate circumstance alluded to was the stoppage of a pension granted, after the loss of his sight, by the partners of a firm he had served for many years. The house failed, consequently the annuity was suspended, with very little chance of its renewal, and thus both father and daughter were at once reduced to a state of abject poverty.

It was a hard task for that young girl to hide these sad events from her beloved parent, whose spirit was even then hovering on the brink of eternity ; yet she patiently went through the trial, and while she taught him to believe that his new habitation was as pleasant and commodious as that from which they came, he never guessed that she seldom partook of the meal provided for him, neither did his imagination picture the meanness of her apparel, or the worn and

faded appearance of his own habiliments. These things were, in mercy, hidden from his view, and so he went on dreaming to the end, nor was he ever awakened to the consciousness of his real situation.

CHAPTER II.

Great and manifold are the changes wrought by time around every domestic hearth, and, alas! how often do they bring with them an increase of that sorrow which is the certain inheritance of man. Who amongst us can look back upon the past, and say, "even as I have lived, so would I live again?" There may, indeed, have been many hours, days, weeks, nay months, of pure unalloyed happiness—but have there not also been times of such unspeakable misery that the spirit would shrink from

purchasing a repetition of life's sweets at the cost of drinking again at its bitter fountains? All are reluctant to die, yet how few would desire to lengthen the term of existence by returning to infancy, and retracing the steps that had once brought them within sight of the tomb, having no power to turn either to the right or to the left, to secure a joy, or to avoid a sorrow? If a new life were offered, indeed, with all life's uncertainties, gladly, perhaps, would most of us accept the proffered gift; but the same? Ah! no—better to lie down, and be at rest. Such had been the feelings of at least one of those whose last scene on earth is the commencement of this narrative. His daughter had for many years been the only tie that bound him to the world; the one oasis of his desert; but she had never known his real name or parentage, and he left her at last in ignorance of both, from motives that can only be explained by a retrospective view of his history.

Reginald, and his brother, the late Sir

Lyttleton Cray, were the sons of a man of obscure origin, who had entered upon his active career in life as a manufacturer, with not very brilliant prospects before him, but being of an enterprising disposition, and, moreover, one of those rare individuals who are prosperous in all their undertakings, he made a large fortune in a short space of time by a series of successful speculations. Nothing ever failed in which he was concerned, and this fact became so notorious that a believer in the abstruse sciences of the Middle Ages might have suspected him of being the lucky finder of the philosopher's stone, since there certainly appeared to be some kind of magic in a touch that often turned the most unpromising metals into gold. There were many persons who did not scruple to affirm that he was indebted to this peculiar faculty for a title, which, according to the judgment of the world, was conferred upon him without any good or sufficient reason; but we are told by one who understood much of human nature, that

"some have greatness thrust upon them," and this might have happened to Mr. Cray, who, it may be presumed, was as liable to such an accident as any other man. But throughout all this life's machinery there are wheels within wheels, *ad-infinitum*, and those who work them often find it convenient to keep them out of sight, and even unsuspected.

He had no sooner reached the height at which his ambition had long pointed, than he became desirous of raising himself still higher in the scale of society, by a matrimonial alliance with some family of distinction, and as a preliminary step towards success in this new venture, he purchased a fine estate in one of the northern counties, known by the name of Culverley Rise. It was a lordly domain which had lately formed part of the possessions of a certain nobleman who died in Italy, leaving his affairs so much embarrassed that it was thought advisable to sell some of the estates, in order to relieve others from their encumbrances. The mansion was

not of modern *date, but it was a noble edifice, with a richly ornamented stone front, and constituted the grand feature of a beautiful landscape, standing proudly conspicuous on an eminence, in the midst of a large, well wooded park, rather wild in its general appearance, but pleasantly diversified by green slopes, clusters of ornamental trees, and a clear stream that wound its silvery way, brightly and with soft sound through the whole extent of the territory.

It is needless to say that Sir Reginald Cray, of Culverley, was quite a distinct person from Mr. Cray, of Ashton Mills, and and in the former character he was not likely to seek long in vain for a lady to share his brilliant fortunes, especially as the only qualification he required in the wife of his bosom was high birth, which he was content to purchase at any price; for he knew perfectly well that it would take a considerable quantity of gold to cover the low origin of wheels and shuttles whence he had emerged to shine in a more exalted sphere,

Lord Milburn was notoriously poor ; his daughter, the Lady Elizabeth, somewhat *passée* ; the earl, therefore, did not think it would be either wise or politic to reject as a son-in-law-one who was so well able to furnish him occasionally with ways and means ; whilst the lady was nothing loth, at the mature age of forty, to exchange her lonely state and home, where she had never enjoyed much comfort, for the advantages of a liberal establishment, and the higher position that marriage gives to a woman in the estimation of the world. A contract made with such motives on both sides was not likely to be very happy in its results ; yet, as each gained the object sought for, neither had a right to expect that happiness would flow from any other source ; for we must not look to reap a golden harvest if we do not sow the right seed.

It was thus that the ex-manufacturer became allied to the aristocracy of the land, and his whole soul was then bent upon obliterating all traces of his plebeian original,

and perpetuating his name as the founder of a noble family. This idea was cherished and dwelt upon till it grew into an all-absorbing passion, which, after the birth of two sons, increased to an absolute mania, for he regarded his children less as objects of paternal care and affection than as instruments given him by Providence to work out his own ambitious views.

Sir Reginald Cray was one of those domestic tyrants who fancy their authority is best asserted, and their dignity most effectually maintained, by making the whole household tremble at the sound of their footsteps; his manner was harsh, his slightest wish always expressed in a tone of stern command, and the least opposition to his will was sure to bring down a thunderstorm upon the head of the offender. This arbitrary disposition, so destructive of the peace that should make home more than a mere abiding place, was unhappily fostered by the meekness of his wife, a timid, nervous woman, naturally amiable, but wanting that

firmness of character which, united with good sense, and tempered by feminine softness, commands a man's respect, and often acts as a check upon his irrational humours.

Poor Lady Elizabeth had always lived in fear of her father; she was now equally afraid of her husband, who consequently fell into the habit of thinking that it was not worth while to control his temper, so he gave the reins to it on every petty occasion, until he became as confirmed a despot as any Indian prince or Turkish pacha.

Some men are proud of their illustrious ancestry, but Sir Reginald's pride was founded upon the anticipation of an illustrious posterity, and even whilst his children were yet in their infancy, he began to speculate upon other noble names besides that of Lord Milburn to grace a future genealogical tree, of which he was himself to figure as the root, and his two sons as the fundamental branches spreading out, the one on his right hand and the other on his left, each having nobility grafted upon it.

This was the subject of his meditations by day and by night, for in his waking hours he was continually sketching out plans for exalting the future heirs of Culverley to the peerage, and in his sleep he dreamed of their realization.

Thus years went on, and the boys passed rapidly from infancy to youth, and from youth to manhood. The actual speed of time is not so forcibly marked by any progression of events, as by this quick transition from age to age, in the life of man through all its seven stages, drawing him still onward without power of resistance, towards that eternity which seems ever distant, although we know that it is approaching still nearer and nearer with every fleeting moment.

Between the brothers there subsisted little or no fraternal affection, for they were brothers only by the laws of Nature, and not by one sacred tie either of earth or heaven that constitutes true brotherhood; yet they were brought up together, were companions as children, and pursued their

studies under the same master at a more advanced age.

Reginald, the elder of the two, a tall, fair, delicate youth, of extreme sensibility, was one of those dreamers who fancy the world is all poetry and romance, and who turn with disgust from its cold realities, looking for happiness in a state of things that has no existence except in their own imaginations. He was quiet and unassuming in his manners, of a mild disposition, and inherited in some measure the nervous temperament of his mother, who bestowed on him by far the largest share of her maternal tenderness, and who was comparatively happy in having at length secured a resting place for her heart's affections, which had never found a home before. The younger son, Lyttleton, was as complete a contrast to his brother, both in mind and person, as could well be imagined. Everybody allowed him to be decidedly handsome, yet there was an air of insolent pretension about him, that gave a disagreeable

expression to his countenance, notwithstanding the perfect symmetry of its strongly marked features. Even more haughty, violent, and overbearing than his father, it was remarkable that those very traits of character which seemed to threaten perpetual warfare between two such turbulent spirits should produce exactly the contrary effect; and that while the unassuming heir was made to suffer under a constant system of tyranny, the bolder youth, who dared to set paternal authority at defiance, was treated with uniform indulgence. It might be that Sir Reginald saw and admired in his second son the elements of his own nature still more fully developed; or it might be that the boy's ascendancy over him arose in the first instance from a curious circumstance that occurred when young Lyttleton was about six years of age. The baronet, no doubt, would have been equally surprised and indignant at such an assumption; perhaps, sincerely so, for most of us are quite unconscious at times of the influences by which

we are really governed, and there certainly is no point on which it is more easy to deceive ourselves. The incident alluded to was this. The child, who was exceedingly precocious, and gifted with extraordinary powers of imitation, was one day amusing himself and his nurse with a mimic representation of his father in one of those violent fits of passion which he had often witnessed, stamping his feet, clenching his tiny hands, and uttering, with all the force his infantine voice was able to command, certain profane expressions that he had heard used on such occasions—expressions of which he did not comprehend the meaning, although his memory retained the sound. In the midst of this exhibition, his father happened to pass the nursery door, and hearing unusual tokens of merriment, stopped for a moment to ascertain the cause, thinking the boy might be reciting some ludicrous verses, when, to his utter astonishment he discovered that the whole performance was a satire upon himself; that he was actually made a subject of

mockery, and that the thunder of his wrath, which he had hitherto supposed could excite only terror, was set at nought and turned into ridicule by a mere baby. Enraged beyond measure, he burst furiously into the apartment, vociferating—

“I’ll teach you to mimic me, sir!”

“I can do it without teaching,” replied the audacious child, looking at him fearlessly, “See here;” and he went through the same manœuvres as before, with as much boldness as if he were certain of applause, neither abashed nor intimidated by the menacing looks of his auditor, who was literally held speechless by the excess of his amazement.

The terrified nurse had vanished immediately after the appearance of her master on the scene of action, fully expecting that the little culprit would be rewarded for his daring exploit by a severe chastisement, and entertaining, moreover, certain misgivings on her own account as having been a party to the offence; but, strange to say, the

effrontery of her young charge not only saved him from the punishment he so justly merited, but gave him a decided advantage over his father, who, like many unreasonable men, dreaded nothing so much as being laughed at, even by a child. Such must have been the feeling, although he was not himself aware of it, that prompted him to suppress his anger and make light of the affair, merely saying, as he turned away—“If ever I find you doing anything of this kind again, sir, I shall punish you severely, depend upon it.” And with this threat he walked out of the room, leaving the boy to glory in his triumph, for a triumph he instinctively felt it to be.

Sir Reginald Cray never mentioned the incident to any one, but from that time he certainly stood in fear of young Lyttleton's powers of ridicule, and even took some pains to conciliate his good will by admitting him to a degree of familiarity that, in the elder son, would have been treated as presumption, and thus the bolder youth came to look

upon his brother with a feeling almost amounting to contempt, and to consider himself as immeasurably his superior in all things except the accident of birth, which, in the eyes of the world, had given the elder an advantage over him, of which he was always envious.

CHAPTER III.

THE first real sorrow experienced by Reginald Cray was the death of his mother, which happened some few months after he had attained his majority, being probably hastened by the fatigue and excitement attending the celebration of that momentous event. Yet she had beheld with pride and pleasure the magnificent display by which her husband thought proper to proclaim to the world that his eldest son was of age, little dreaming that the time would come when that beloved son, who was now honoured as the future lord of the domain, would stand outside its gates, a stranger

wanting bread ; and it was perhaps ordained in mercy that the poor lady should be summoned hence before the gathering of those dark clouds that were destined to overshadow his future days. Sir Reginald cared little or nothing for his son personally, but as heir to his title and estate he considered him of the highest importance ; therefore his twenty-first birthday was kept with an ostentatious parade of rejoicing, intended to impress upon the public mind that the heir of Sir Reginald Cray, of Culverley, was a personage of no little consequence.

The church bells were rung ; the tenants and villagers were regaled in the park ; and the gentry entertained in the great banquetting hall of the mansion. There was dancing, and music, and feasting, from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof ; and he who was already marked for misfortune, and was eventually carried to the grave unnoticed and unknown, was the centre of that brilliant scene, the object of general homage and gratulation.

It was then that Lyttelton felt, more keenly than he had ever felt before, the wide distinction between the position of an elder and a younger son. He was mortified at witnessing the universal respect paid to his brother, whilst he was himself comparatively neglected, and all the evil passions of his nature were aroused by this public demonstration of the rights and advantages of primogeniture.

Jealous and discontented, he looked upon the festivities of the day as an insult to himself, and withdrew in a sullen mood to the most lonely part of the park, to brood over the unequal dispensations of Providence, and murmur at the fate that had sent his brother into the world before him. The loud acclamations of the joyous rustics as they drank the health of the heir, augmented his displeasure, and gave birth to yet more sinful thoughts—the mark of Cain was in shadow on his brow, reflected from some dark and shapeless vision that floated through his excited brain, whilst a voice seemed to

whisper in his ear—"If he were not, all these honours would be thine." They were the words of the tempter, and though he dared not follow up the dreadful suggestion which they conveyed, he hated his brother in his secret soul, and would gladly have done him any injury that would not lead to his own hurt. This evil disposition was not suspected by the unoffending object of his malevolence, who was far too amiable to imagine that enmity could subsist without a cause; nor would his unworldly mind have comprehended the feeling whence it arose.

About six months after the birthday fête, Lady Elizabeth Cray died of decline.

Reginald felt her loss deeply, for he was the only one who had known and appreciated the many quiet, unobtrusive virtues that had lain hidden in her heart, finding no room to expand themselves, as flowers sometimes wither and die in the bud, for want of the genial sunshine that should draw them forth, and bid them blossom to the world. Soon after this event, he obtained with some

difficulty his father's permission to make a continental tour, a project he had entertained for some time, but had delayed on account of his mother's declining health, as he knew that his absence would leave her without the comfort and consolation she so much needed.

Sir Reginald gave his consent upon these two conditions—that he should not remain abroad for more than the space of two years, and that immediately on his return he should marry a lady whose rank in life would enhance the dignity of the family. The young man did not exactly like the latter stipulation, but he knew his father too well to attempt to gain his point on any other terms, and, after all, a promise that had two years to run was a very different thing from one that was to be fulfilled on the moment; he therefore inconsiderately pledged his word, and in so doing sealed his own doom.

He set off in high spirits, with as fair a prospect before him of present enjoyment and future prosperity as any young man

could desire. Money was liberally supplied to him by his father, who was too vain a man not to take especial care that his son should appear abroad in a style that would reflect the light of its glory upon himself; and, with the means thus at his command of travelling in the easiest manner, and going wherever he pleased, Reginald's heart beat lightly in his bosom, and his fine countenance was animated with the pleasure derived from joys anticipated, as he sprang upon his horse, and waving a last adieu to his father, who was standing with dignified composure at the hall door to witness his departure, he galloped down the avenue, followed by his groom.

Outside the park gates a number of the tenants had assembled, to see "the young squire set off on his travels," and express their heartfelt wishes for his safe return; and he checked his horse to shake hands with these well-meaning people, and say a kind word to each in turn, as they poured forth their hearty good will in such vocifera-

tions as these—"God bless you, Mr. Reginald!" "Wishing you health and happiness, sir!" "Hope your honour will come back safe and well!" &c., &c., showing how popular he was amongst those who looked upon him as their future lord.

Lyttleton had purposely kept out of the way, as he suspected that some such demonstration would be made, and did not want to be a witness to it. Therefore, he had taken leave of his brother early in the morning, and gone off to Preston on pretence of business.

A few weeks had elapsed since the departure of Reginald, when the baronet took occasion to speak to his younger son on the subject of turning his attention towards the choice of a profession, an intimation that was by no means agreeable to the young gentleman, who did not scruple to express—in rather strong terms—his distaste for a professional career, and his surprise that his father should entertain such an idea.

"I really see no alternative," said the

baronet, in reply. "As a younger son you will, of course, have to make a name for yourself, and there are three roads open to you: the church, the army, and the bar; either may give you a high position, and whichever you select, it will be in my power to back you, both with money and influence: therefore all you have to do is, to consult your own inclinations."

"Then, sir, the plain truth is, my inclinations do not lean towards either. I hate the army, and as for the other two lines you propose, I should never get through the necessary drudgery."

"That is unfortunate," replied his father, rather coldly, "since it will be absolutely necessary that you should fix upon one or other of them."

"I really do not see the absolute necessity," said Lyttleton.

"I am surprised you do not; it is sufficiently obvious, that is, if you are to be anybody at all," said his father.

"It seems to me very possible to hit upon

an easier method of making somebody of myself than by playing knave at the bar, or hypocrite in the pulpit," said young Hopeful.

Sir Reginald laughed at this view of the case, and replied

"If you have any better plan to offer, I cannot possibly object. What is it you think of doing?"

"Marrying a rich widow, and getting a seat in Parliament."

"Not a bad idea, certainly, if it can be carried out, but the connection must be good, and I doubt whether, in your present position, you will be able to command fortune and family, too, in a wife."

"I am of a different opinion," replied the young man, glancing at his handsome person in an opposite mirror; "at any rate the trial is worth making, and as I don't mean to be particular about a few years more or less, you understand, I have the better chance of success."

"But heirs, Lyttleton, heirs—you must not lose sight of that," said Sir Reginald,

again laughing ; to which observation Lyttleton coolly replied that he was not going to marry his grandmother.

"Then you have somebody in view, I suppose?"

"Excuse me, sir ; that is at present entirely my own affair. All I ask of you is, to give me two years abroad, as you have given Reginald ; and if, at the end of that time, there is no prospect of my plan succeeding, I will be content to adopt yours."

Sir Reginald was perfectly satisfied ; he knew the youth he had to deal with, and felt sure his plan would succeed ; still he could not even guess at the object of his matrimonial speculation, but feeling assured there was something more in it than a mere vain boast, he made up his mind to give the desired permission without further inquiry.

In less than a fortnight after this conversation, Lyttleton Cray was in Paris. His father had furnished him with the means of obtaining liberal supplies of money through one of the principal banking houses, and his

grandfather, Lord Milburn, with introductions to several English families of distinction then sojourning in the French capital, both gentlemen being pretty well convinced they were forwarding a good cause; and of the advantages thus afforded him Lyttleton was not slow to avail himself, having a specific object in view. The Honourable Mrs. Drummond was in Paris. She was a coarse, masculine woman, some fifteen or sixteen years older than himself, but then she was a well endowed widow, the niece of a bishop, and the cousin of a lord. She had met him several times at the house of his grandfather, and had spoken in flattering terms of his personal attractions to a friend, which friend had duly reported her commendations to the object of them, and it was on this vantage ground he took his stand.

For a time, however, his success appeared to be doubtful; there was a rival candidate in the field; but he was not one to give up easily a point he had resolved to carry, and

his perseverance met with all the success he had expected. The widow was wooed and won, and in less than six months from the time of his crossing the channel he presented her at Munich to his astonished brother in the character of Mrs. Lyttleton Cray. Reginald had, in the meantime, been wandering beneath the sunny skies of Italy, dreaming of past ages amongst the classic monuments of ancient Rome, poetizing the beauties of Tuscany, and indulging, to the full, his romantic aspirations amid the wild scenery of the Tyrol, through which he passed into the Bavarian dominions. The meeting with his brother at Munich was a great surprise to him, but not so great as the introduction that first made him aware of his near relationship to the lady in question, for Sir Reginald, in his very concise epistles, had made no mention of Lyttleton's movements, and the brothers held no correspondence with each other, so that he was not only ignorant of the actual marriage, but even of the fact that such an event was

in contemplation ; and when the bride was introduced to him, was so completely off his guard as to start back with unmistakeable signs of amazement, and exclaim, "Good Heavens !"—a mode of congratulation not exactly warranted by the laws of politeness, and well understood by the worldly woman, who never forgot or forgave it.

Lyttleton felt angry, too, yet he would, perhaps, have been rather disposed to rejoice, if he could have foreseen how this unfavourable impression would act upon the high toned mind of his sensitive brother, who looked with disgust upon so ill assorted a union, as being both unprincipled and degrading.

"What a revolting mockery," he said to himself, "is a marriage like this, of the heart's most sacred affections. Oh, Love ! why is thy temple ever thus desecrated ? Sooner, much sooner, would I give up all that belongs to my birthright than continue to hold it by offering up such unholy incense at thy shrine !"

It is an easy thing, when prosperity is hovering around us, illuming the flowery path with her effulgent rays, and pointing with rosy fingers to bright and glorious scenes in the distance—it is easy then to say, “All this I could resign.” But when we see the flowers withering, and the golden lights fading away—when we feel the sharp thorns springing up beneath our feet, and behold the dark clouds rolling on thicker and faster before us, shutting out for ever the glowing prospect on which our eyes had been used to dwell—who would not sigh with regret over the memory of that which was lost?

With his mind already predisposed, by existing circumstances, to lose sight of all prudential considerations, Reginald Cray found himself thrown in the way of a danger from which he made no attempt to escape. In the course of his rambles he had chanced to meet with one of those highly gifted musicians, of whom Germany may claim to be the fatherland. He was a

man one might have supposed to belong to some other world, so little did he know of this. An enthusiast in the sublime art to which his whole soul was devoted, he existed in a state of beatitude, surrounded by an atmosphere of his own creation, through which he saw nothing of the realities of life, being satisfied to believe that all was as it appeared to be, and that human nature was made up of such harmonious elements as constituted his own state of being. But he had the one besetting sin which is so frequently the companion of genius—he was improvident, literally taking no thought for the morrow, consequently he was always poor, a circumstance that mattered little as regarded one whose desires were so few and simple, and whose happiness was centred within the narrow limits of his studio ; yet, for his daughter's sake, it might have been as well if he had bestowed more thought on the world and its ways.

His usual residence was at Munich, but Reginald had been some days in that capital before he thought of calling upon him,

although he had been cordially invited, and had faithfully promised so to do ; however, on the day he so unexpectedly met with Lyttleton and his lady, he sought out the musician's abode, a mean looking house in an obscure quarter of the city ; yet poor as it was in outward seeming, there was that within which gave it, to the charmed eyes of the visitor, all the lustre of an enchanted palace. Agnes Riesberg was one of those beautiful creations of Nature that seem born to realise the bright ideal of a poet's dream. Her face was one that an artist would select as a study for the angel of his picture, so calm in its radiance, so celestial in its expression ; the deep blue eyes, that beamed with heavenly light, the golden hair, the slight graceful form, the voice soft and melodious as music on the waters—all these were charms that could scarcely fail to captivate the senses of a young man like Reginald Cray, especially at this particular moment, when every thought and feeling was so powerfully influenced by the late interview with his brother's unattractive bride.

CHAPTER IV.

The brothers, though located in the same part of the city, saw very little of each other, only meeting now and then by accident, when they merely interchanged such civilities as might pass between slight acquaintances, and went their separate ways. Reginald had motives for this avoidance even more powerful than his distaste for the society of the newly-married couple, for his visits to Mr. Riesberg were now of daily recurrence, and he was perfectly aware of the dangerous position in which he might

be placed should any suspicion be awakened as to the magnet that attracted him towards the musician's abode. He trusted to secrecy for his safety, but it was leaning on a broken staff, for there are always numerous outlets, invisible and unsuspected, by which a secret may escape from the surest hold, and find its way to the ears from which we would most desire to guard it. In this case it was betrayed by a very simple accident.

One of the students at the university, a young Frenchman named Camille Dupont, was nearly related to Mrs. Lyttleton Cray, whose marriage he looked upon as a most fortunate event, insomuch as it had been the means of bringing her to Munich, and thereby procuring for himself several pleasant excursions, and divers other gaieties, that would not have fallen to his lot but for some such happy contingency. He was a lively, good-natured youth, about seventeen, always ready for a frolic, but without the slightest tincture of malice or mischief in his disposition. Nothing would have tempted

him to do an injury wilfully to any human being, yet it was through his agency that the ruin of a very amiable but most unfortunate man was accomplished. Incapable of deception himself, he was wholly unsuspecting of the artifices that are so constantly practised by more sophisticated members of the community at large, for the advancement of their own particular views, and he was for that very reason selected by Lyttleton Cray as a fitting instrument to be employed in the furtherance of certain designs that the latter was prompted, by unexpected circumstances, to form against his unwary brother. The apparently trifling incident that gave him the first idea of Reginald's ill-fated attachment was this. One morning he was riding in a close carriage through one of the narrow streets of the suburbs, accompanied by his wife and the student, when his attention was directed by the former towards a gentleman who was walking rather hurriedly a little in advance of them.

"Is not that your brother?" she inquired.

"Yes, I think it is his slovenly walk," was the reply; "shall we ask him where he is going?"

But the question was needless, for at that moment he stopped at a door which stood half open, and, passing through, disappeared, without observing either the vehicle or its occupants.

"Dear me!" said the lady, "who can he possibly be visiting at that shabby looking house?"

"That is where Mr. Riesberg lives," observed Dupont, who spoke tolerably good English; "Monsieur goes to see him, perhaps."

"And who is Mr. Riesberg, Camille?"

"I thought I had told you, aunt; he teaches music, and I am meaning to take some lessons of him. Your brother, is he fond of music, Mr. Cray?"

"I don't know, I'm sure—very likely," replied Lyttelton, carelessly.

"Mr. Riesberg is a great performer," continued the youth with his usual vivacity—

"he plays the violin admirably, and the piano also. It is the piano I am studying, I am so fond of that instrument; and Mr. Riesberg—oh! you should do well to hear him play—it is magnificent! He has got such a pretty daughter, Mademoiselle Agnes—she is quite beautiful; I never saw any one so beautiful in my life."

"Indeed!" responded Lyttleton, who was not so utterly indifferent to this piece of intelligence as to the laudation of the German's musical abilities; "pray what age may the young lady be?"

"Near to seventeen, I should believe. If you would like to see her, you can easily call with me when I go to arrange the time for taking my lessons, and then—"

"How ridiculously you talk, Camille!" said the lady, with some asperity; "what in the world should Mr. Cray want to see your music master's daughter for?"

"Only because everybody likes to look at pretty girls, aunt—at least, I know I do, and what harm is it?"

"None at all," replied Lyttleton, laughing, "young ladies were made I suppose to be looked at by young gentlemen who have nothing better to do; but I must confess that I have not much taste myself for beauties of seventeen. Milk and water is all very well in its way, but rather insipid when we get past our bread and butter days. Therefore, I shall decline your obliging offer, Monsieur Camille."


This indirect compliment had the desired effect of appeasing the angry fair one, and nothing more was said on the subject; but it did not pass from the mind of Lyttleton Cray, who meditated upon what he had heard and seen till he had made it the basis of a domestic drama, in which he saw himself exalted to the very summit of his ambition.

"Many a romantic fool has ruined himself by a love match," he said exultingly—"and he is exactly the man to do it. Let him but marry her, and my fortune is made."

Then, following up this idea, he began to consider whether it might not be possible to induce the young Frenchman to become a spy upon his brother's actions. He was himself about to leave Munich in a few days, for Paris, but he had reason to believe that Reginald contemplated a much longer stay, and he saw that it would be of the utmost importance in furthering his own views, to establish some mode of communication by which he might be pretty accurately informed of his proceedings, and thus enabled to judge whether there was any truth in the conjectures on which his new-born hopes were founded. He knew that the only way to gain the assistance of Camille was by persuading him that no mischief was intended by the proposed espial ; nor did he anticipate much difficulty in imposing this belief on one of so frank and generous a nature ; therefore, he formed his plans accordingly, and the result fully answered his expectations.

Camille, being remarkably handsome,

possessed a certain amount of personal vanity that was quite natural at his age, but rather inconvenient, as leading him to covet many expensive trifles for outward adornment his means were too limited to compass, so that it was easy to gain his hearty good will by ministering to that little foible, which the wily schemer did not scruple to take advantage of for his own particular benefit. The present of a splendid emerald ring so far won upon the affections of the delighted youth that he was ready to place his life in jeopardy for the sake of so liberal a friend, firmly believing, with all the simplicity of a young, uncorrupted heart, that such generosity must surely be accompanied by every corresponding virtue. If he had known the true object of the gift he would have recoiled with horror from the pollution of its touch ; but it was not till many years afterwards that he learned how much misery he unconsciously wrought, and the worthlessness of him whose diabolical schemes he involuntarily aided.



"Camille," said Lyttleton, "I want you to do me an especial service; but, first of all, can you keep a secret?"

"Oh, yes; do not fear for me—I will not disclose a secret ever; and shall have much pleasure to do you service, if I am able."

"That's a good fellow—it is only to help me in playing off a joke upon my solemn brother. You see how unsociable he is; why, he has hardly come near us since we have been here."

"Can you tell why is it?" said Camille.

"I can only guess; and my notion is that he is carrying on a courtship with somebody here in Munich that he does not want me to know anything about, for he was always fond of doing things on the sly system."

"Perhaps it is Mademoiselle Riesberg," said the youth. "Do you not remember he went to the house? I never have seen him but that one time."

"And he has never seen you at all, that is the best of it; for I strongly suspect that you have hit upon the right person. In fact,

I am pretty sure of it; and if I could only find him out I would have such glorious fun!"

"Hah! I should very much like to help you in that. What would you do, Mr. Cray?"

"Why, if I were to hear he was privately married, I would send a large wedding cake from England, and would have a flaming account of the marriage in all the London newspapers, as if it had been celebrated with great magnificence. How surprised he would be, when he thought he had kept it so quietly to himself."

Camille seemed to enjoy the idea amazingly, and said, with great glee—

"That would be famous! How I would laugh if Monsieur Reginald should marry *la belle Agnes*."

"Well, then, what I want you to do is this. It seems you are going to take music lessons of her father at his house, so that you will have opportunities of observing whether there is anything of the sort going

on, and can write to me all about it : but you must not let my brother know who you are, or he would be upon his guard, and then you would discover nothing."

"Yes, yes ; I comprehend. If he should know I am your friend, he would avoid to let me see when he makes his visits."

"Just so, and that would spoil all."

Camille entered into the plot with all the zest of a frolicsome schoolboy, believing it to be nothing more than a harmless jest, and promised he would take particular care not to betray his connection with the family : a promise he kept but too well.

This conversation took place only the day before Lyttleton and his lady quitted the Bavarian capital ; and being satisfied that he had secured an efficient ally, the former had no wish to remain longer, as he looked forward to a happy release in Paris from that close attendance on his wife which she rigorously exacted at this place, where she had no intimate acquaintances. Before he left, however, it was necessary, as a matter

of form, to take leave of his brother, and he was on the point of going out to call at his hotel for that purpose, when a letter was brought to him bearing the London post-mark, and directed in Lord Milburn's handwriting. He opened it without returning to the apartment where he had just left his wife, and when he had read it congratulated himself on this precaution, as he at once resolved not to make the contents known to any one. The epistle was brief, for Lord Milburn was now so old and infirm that it was a great exertion for him to write a letter; but the case was urgent, as Sir Reginald was dangerously ill, and had desired that his sons should be summoned home without delay. Having stated this important fact in a few words, his lordship went on to say: "I should have written to Reginald if I had been sure he was still at Munich; but as you will, of course, know where a letter may find him, in case he has left, I beg you will not lose an instant in communicating this intelligence, as he had better set out immediately."

Lyttleton perused this document two or three times, then put it into his pocket, and sauntered towards the hotel, where his brother was staying. It was nearly noon, yet Reginald was still in his dressing gown, lying idly on a sofa, reading.

"Oh, is it you, Lyttleton—what news?"

"None, that I know of, except that we are off to-morrow morning to Paris, so I just looked in to say good-bye."

"Going back to Paris, are you. How long do you mean to stay there?"

"I don't exactly know; it will depend on circumstances. By the way, where do you intend to go next?"

"Probably to Vienna, but I have not quite determined. I had some thoughts of going to St. Petersburg, but it is rather too late in the year for that. At all events I shall stay here two or three weeks longer, and as soon as I change my quarters will write to my father to let him know where I am. By the way, if you are going to-morrow, I ought to pay my respects to Mrs.

Cray. Shall I walk back with you?"

"Why, no—It would be no use, for she will be out all the morning paying farewell visits; and, this evening, we are engaged; so I am afraid you will not see her at all as we start very early to-morrow. But I can carry your adieus and say what is polite, which will do quite as well."

Reginald was not sorry to be relieved from this duty, but he had no idea that his brother had invented these excuses to prevent him from calling on Mrs. Cray. The fact was Lyttleton was apprehensive, that, in paying this compliment to his lady, Reginald might chance to meet with young Dupont, an accident he was most anxious to guard against for reasons sufficiently obvious.

After about ten minutes conversation of a desultory, unimportant character, the two brothers shook hands and parted with as much indifference as if they expected to meet again in half an hour. They never saw each other more; but, thirty years afterwards, they met as already told, in their

way to "that bourn whence no traveller returns"—"Where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest."

CHAPTER V.

LYTTLETON CRAY had been married above three months, yet had not fully determined in his own mind how far it would be expedient to take his wife into his confidence, and while that question was still pending, he deemed it prudent to wear in her sight that semblance of good feeling and principle which, like skilful gilding, hides every defect, and gives in appearance the worth of solid gold to paltry images of wood or clay. He had contrived to keep from her knowledge the arrangement he had made with

young Dupont, whom he had induced, by some plausible pretext, to keep a guarded silence in his aunt's presence, on the subject of Reginald's supposed engagement; and, continuing to act on the same principle of caution, he did not mention his grandfather's letter until they reached Paris, when he unblushingly asserted that he had received it at the banker's, where he called immediately on his arrival, ostensibly to get a supply of money, but in reality to give an air of truth to this falsehood. The uneasiness he experienced respecting his father's illness was, however, no fiction, for he did, indeed, most sincerely hope that Sir Reginald would not depart this life upon such very short notice, and was impatient to proceed at once to England, that he might be upon the spot, ready to take instant advantage of such intelligence from Munich as, he doubted not, he should soon receive.

These hasty measures were not at all agreeable to his wife, who cared very little whether the baronet lived or died, not being

aware that she might possibly have some future interest in the matter, and having calculated upon appearing at all the fashionable places of resort around the French capital under the escort of her handsome young husband, whose exterior advantages she valued highly, inasmuch as she thought they would tend to obliterate from the memory of society the decrepit figure of an aged individual to whom she had formerly been linked in holy wedlock, a blot upon her history she was most anxious to erase. There were several French families of distinction belonging to the circle in which she revolved, to whom she had not yet had the opportunity of introducing her new appendage, so that this ill-timed indisposition of Sir Reginald Cray was particularly vexatious, and she manifested her extreme annoyance by a display of general ill humour, which Lyttleton affected not to observe, as he meditated a speedy escape.

“If you choose to go off in such a violent hurry,” she said, “though I cannot say I

see the necessity for it, I hope you don't expect me to go with you."

Now, this was precisely what he aimed at, yet he thought it as well, in the present state of his affairs, to express a becoming amount of regret at leaving her behind him, to which she did not incline a very favourable ear, having enough of worldly wisdom to be somewhat doubtful as to the sincerity of such professions.

"It is very lucky I happened to call at Lemoine's to-day," he remarked, "or I should have known nothing about it, for they were just going to forward the letter to Munich."

"I wish to Heaven they had, then!" replied the lady, pettishly. "What do you mean to do about your brother?"

"I must write to him this moment; I shall just have time to do that, and settle some other matters, before I go, as the diligence does not start for a couple of hours. The shortest way will be to enclose my grandfather's letter, with just a few words

from myself, in the envelope. It had better go through Lemoine's, for they have a quicker mode of communication than the post."

He wrote, or made a pretence of writing, two or three lines, sealed and directed the packet, and, saying he would take it himself, went out as if for that purpose; but the letter remained in his pocket till he found an opportunity of destroying it, and in two hours he was on the road to Calais.

At that period the journey between Paris and London was not quite so easily or so speedily accomplished as in these pleasanter times, nor was a French diligence either the most comfortable or the most expeditious mode of travelling; but all things must have an end, and even a journey in a stage coach, interminable as it may now appear, cannot last for ever.

On his arrival in London, Lyttleton called at his grandfather's house, but as the old gentleman was out of town, he could learn nothing there beyond the bare fact that his

father was still in being ; yet even this was a considerable relief to his mind, and during the rest of the journey which, for the greater speed, was performed with post horses, his busy brain was occupied in maturing the plans by which he hoped to gain possession of all he had so long coveted.

It was early in the autumn, and one of the brightest of those golden days peculiar to that richest and most beautiful of all the seasons of the year. A remarkably brilliant sunset threw its gorgeous colouring over a scene scarcely equalled, perhaps, in all England for variety and loveliness, and as Lyttleton entered the park gates he paused for a brief space to gaze around him with a feeling almost approaching to admiration, for, insensible as he was in general to the charms of landscape scenery, he could not help being struck by the beauties of this. The noble mansion stood, proudly pre-eminent, at the far end of a broad avenue formed by trees of luxuriant growth, on the height from which the estate derived its

name of Culverley Rise. It was a grand edifice ; and at that moment any imaginative spectator might have fancied he was looking on one of the enchanted palaces of the Arabian tales, for the whole fabric appeared to be illumined with dazzling lights of purple, crimson, and gold, that streamed from every window, as if emanating from some magic scene of splendour passing within. The winding stream, the verdant slopes, and the majestic trees were all tinged with the same resplendent hues, and there were fine pasture meadows, and fields of waving corn, all appertaining to that fair domain, which might, indeed, be called a rich inheritance.

The sight was not such as to lessen the desire for possession in the breast of an envious, unprincipled man ; and as his eyes still wandered from one to another of the objects that, familiar as they had been to him from childhood, had never appeared in so attractive a light as now, he said to himself—

“Am I not, also, my father’s son ? Then

why should a man submit to unjust laws of man's making if he can find means to right himself?"

And with this wretched attempt to quiet his conscience by specious reasoning, he hastened his steps towards the house.

Sir Reginald was better; the immediate danger was past, but his wasted frame and pallid countenance gave evidence that his days were numbered, and the sand of his hour glass nearly run out.

Still he clung to life with all the tenacity of a man whose heart is wholly of this world, and his chief anxiety was to hasten the return of Reginald, for whom he had been negotiating an alliance with one of the first families in the county. Lyttleton's marriage had given him the highest satisfaction; still he considered it of much more importance that his eldest son, the future representative of his dignity, should unite himself with a noble house, and he had taken infinite pains to secure the promise of Viscount Wellbridge, that he would be

graciously pleased to bestow on Mr. Reginald Cray, with a suitable dower, the hand of his fourth daughter, Lady Letitia, who was not much over twenty, and extremely accomplished, but very plain, and, moreover, gifted by nature with a temper that is aptly described by the word "snappish." Two of the elder sisters were married, and the third engaged to a man of rank, but, as there were three younger ones all rather pretty and very amiable, it is probable that the noble peer thought it the best policy not to neglect an opportunity of marrying his shrewish, unlovely daughter to the heir of a wealthy baronet, although his pedigree would not bear a strict investigation; for, to say the truth, both he and his countess had been haunted with sad misgivings as to the chances of Lady Letitia ever figuring in the interesting character of a bride at all. So anxious was Sir Reginald to witness the completion of this hopeful scheme, that he quite lost sight of the agreement he had made with his son to allow him two years

of freedom, not much more than half of which time was yet expired; and as day after day passed on without word or sign to denote his coming, the wrath and indignation of the father at this seeming neglect were so violent as to threaten a return of all the dangerous symptoms of his disorder. Lyttleton had told him that when Lord Milburn's express reached Munich, his brother was gone out for two or three days on a sketching excursion, therefore he had left the letter with his valet, charging him to deliver it to his master the instant he returned, so that he ought to have arrived in England about the same time as himself, for he would come by a more direct route than through Paris, which he, Lyttleton, had been obliged to take in his way on his wife's account.

More than a week, however, had now elapsed, and the dissatisfaction of the baronet had reached a fearful height, when Lyttleton took occasion to instil into his mind the first drop of that subtle poison which

was destined to destroy all the brilliant prospects, the peace, the health, and eventually the life, of the ill-fated heir.

One morning Sir Reginald, whose natural irritability was, if possible, increased by illness, had been indulging in furious invectives against the absentee, when Lyttleton abruptly asked—

“Does Reginald know anything about your views respecting the Wellbridge people?”

“No. I thought it would be time enough when he came.”

“Then that can’t be the reason why he keeps away.”

“The reason why he keeps away!” echoed his father in a tone that indicated the utmost astonishment at such an observation. “What do you mean?”

“Well, I don’t know; but it strikes me there may be difficulties in the way of that engagement greater than you anticipate.”

“Difficulties! What difficulties? You surely don’t suppose he would be such an insensate fool as to make any?”

Lyttleton shrugged his shoulders with an air of peculiar significance, on which Sir Reginald became greatly excited, and insisted on knowing the tendency of these mysterious hints.

"Why the fact is," said Lyttleton, "I did hear some vague rumours while I was in Germany, that I begin to suspect were not entirely without foundation, but I was loth to make you uneasy."

"Just be so good as to explain yourself, will you? and don't drive me mad with this foolery. What was the nature of the reports you heard?"

"I am sorry to say they were of a nature to interfere considerably with your plans; some unaccountable infatuation—in short, a love affair. If I had not been called away so suddenly, I might have found out whether there is anything serious in it or not. I'm sure I hope there is not, for they are but low kind of people, that one would be ashamed to acknowledge, and wretchedly poor."

"Who are they? What are they?" demanded the baronet in a voice of thunder.

"The father gets his living by teaching the violin, and the girl is, I believe, intended for a public singer, or something of that sort, unless she should be lucky enough to get a good husband, which I suppose would answer her purpose better."

"It cannot be, Lyttleton; he would never dare to do it."

"There's no telling what your sentimental people will dare to do; for my part, I don't pretend to understand them. The girl is remarkably pretty, they say, and very fascinating, but I have not seen her myself, so I cannot speak from my own knowledge as to her attractions."

The baronet mused for a few moments, then said abruptly—

"A public singer, you say, and poor?"

"Yes, as far as I can understand."

"Then, of course, matrimony is out of the question, and as for any other sort of *liaison*, I shall not trouble myself about it

any further than to insist on his return home by the end of the month, for it is my particular wish that his marriage should not be delayed beyond Christmas."

"Well, sir, I hope you will not be disappointed, that's all."

"If I am, he shall have cause to repent it, as I shall take good care to let him know; and he is very well aware I am not a man to make unmeaning threats. Do you know anything more about this affair besides what you have told me?"

"Not a great deal."

"Then you do know something?" Sir Reginald said angrily. "What is it, sir? I command you to tell me all. How far has he gone?"

"If you positively insist upon it," replied Lyttleton, taking a letter from his pocket with seeming reluctance, "I received this yesterday from a young fellow, a Frenchman (I made acquaintance with him at Munich) who is learning music of this girl's father, and it appears to me a pretty strong confirmation of my suspicions."

The baronet, trembling with passion, reached out his hand to take the letter, but fortunately for Lyttleton's purpose, it was written in French, a language his father was totally unacquainted with—therefore he could translate it his own way, leaving out such portions as might betray his own shameless duplicity.

The purport of the missive was, that whenever Camille went to take his lesson of Mr. Riesberg, he was sure to find Reginald Cray at the house, and from all he had observed, there was good and sufficient ground for believing he was the accepted lover of "*la belle Agnes*," as the young man habitually styled her. One paragraph, and Lyttleton read that as it was written, without altering or suppressing a single syllable, ran thus:—

"I said one time to Mr. Riesberg: 'Madoiselle will soon be married, I think?' and he laughed and replied: 'Yes, you are right. It was my wish that she should marry one of her own country, but she prefers this Englishman,

and I shall not object, for he seems a very good young gentleman, and will be a rich and great man, too, when his father dies."

"Will he?" vociferated the baronet, who could contain his rage no longer. "Rich and great, when I die—eh? He may find himself mistaken though, and this beggarly German fiddler, too; he has been reckoning, I suppose, on my death to make his own fortune. But they may all starve together, and the sooner the better. Give me a pen and ink, Lyttleton, and some paper; I will write for Flowers and make a fresh will; not a shilling of mine shall he ever touch; and as to the greatness he boasts of, it will not be of much use to him unless his father-in-law can furnish him with means to support it, and he must fiddle to some tune, I think, before he is able to do that."

And he laughed grimly, nay, quite ferociously, at his own miserable, unfeeling jest, which was not, however, lost upon his son, who caught from it an idea that had not struck him before. If his brother were dis-

inherited in his favour, what was to prevent him from usurping the title? A beggared man would have no means of disputing it, nor would it be worth his while so to do, for a title, coupled with poverty, is an encumbrance, not a benefit. Camille's letter ended in a merry strain—

"I think you may prepare your cake, Mr. Cray," it said, "and pray let it be a very large one, that I may come in for a good slice, and as I shall have a decided interest when it arrives in making known that I belong to the family, you must not expect me to keep the secret any longer."

Poor Camille! he thought he was writing to one as guileless as himself, and slept with a clear conscience and a light heart, even whilst the poisoned arrow he had so innocently sped was dealing death and destruction.

Mr. Flowers, in obedience to his client's hasty summons, posted down from London to Culverley Rise. He was much surprised at finding he was sent for to legalize what

he considered to be an act of extreme cruelty and injustice; so cruel, indeed, and unjust, in his opinion, that he could not reconcile it to his conscience to do his part without remonstrance; for he had a conscience, notwithstanding the popular prejudice that refuses to recognise this faculty as one of the component parts of a solicitor. Mr. Flowers was, in fact, a gentleman, a scholar, and a man of principle; therefore, he could not help sometimes being foolish enough to let his sense of right interfere with business, and did not altogether feel comfortable at the idea of lending his aid to such a transaction, at least, until he had done his utmost to prevent it; so he said—

“This is rather a hasty step, Sir Reginald; I should advise you to take a little more time to consider of it, before you resolve upon a measure of such serious import. Besides, it appears to me that you are acting without any very definite reason, upon the bare surmise of a youth who may be entirely mistaken.”

"Sir, there is no mistake about it—sir, they thought I was dying, and they sent for this man who calls himself my son, but he did not think proper to come, nor has he troubled himself to ask, even by letter, whether I am alive or dead—there's no mistake about that, I suppose."

"My good sir, I will not undertake to say there is no mistake about it. How often does it happen that we are deceived by appearances, and it is quite possible, nay, I would almost venture to say it is certain, from the very fact of his not having written, that your son, by some accident, has never heard of your illness at all. Surely, you would not sign a man's death warrant before he is proved guilty. Suppose you were to write yourself to Mr. Cray, and await the result: if he should not be able to give a satisfactory account of himself, it will be quite time enough then to take away his birthright—rather too grave a matter to resolve upon without being sure of your ground."

Sir Reginald hesitated—the lawyer might be right, and, in that case, he saw it would be against his own interest to execute a deed that must inevitably put an end to his favourite scheme of an alliance with the noble family from which he had selected a bride for the legitimate heir of his house. It was this consideration, and not any sense of justice or kindly feeling towards Reginald, that caused him to pause upon the meditated act, and at length he so far yielded to the arguments of his legal adviser, as to consent that he would defer the proposed alteration of his will until he had received some communication from his absent son.

Mr. Flowers returned to town, well pleased with what he had done, for he said to himself—

“I really don’t see why a man is to be cut off from his natural inheritance because he happens to prefer a field flower to a prize tulip. It is a matter of taste, and no offence whatever against religion or morality.

If I can save this young fellow from ruin I shall be heartily glad to do so, but the only chance is to gain time. The old man looks as if he could not last out another week, and if he should die in the present state of affairs, why the heir must take possession as a matter of course, though he may be married to a milkmaid, and nobody can prevent it. Sir Reginald is violent and obstinate, still this little delay gives the young man a chance at any rate; that is if the baronet is as near his end as I take him to be. A respite of ten days is decidedly important at this crisis, and was the best thing I could do for him, there can be no doubt I think about that." But Mr. Flowers was not aware of the malevolent spirit that was at work to counteract his good intentions, consequently he was equally surprised and disappointed when, after the lapse of little more than a week, he received intelligence from a Mr. Bolton, a country lawyer, living at Preston, of the death of Sir Reginald Cray, coupled with the unwelcome informa-

tion that, only a few hours previous to his demise, he had made a fresh will by which his younger son Lyttleton was constituted his sole heir.

CHAPTER VI.

AND how was Fate speeding with the absent Reginald?

Whilst his father was dying, and his brother employing all his art to rob him of his patrimony, he was dreaming away his days in a visionary paradise, lost to everything but the blissful delusions of a romantic passion that seemed to shed a lustrous halo round the future, only to leave it in deeper gloom when the false light faded away. He saw nothing above, below, around him but endless joys, and things that were

bright and beautiful ; sweet were the flowers that bloomed in his path to the very edge of the precipice they concealed from his sight ; and so he wandered on, heedless of all but the passing hour, until he was hurled down the hidden fall by a blow from an invisible hand, and found himself on a troubled sea, without a compass to guide his frail bark, or a helm to steer it.

In Agnes Riesberg he had beheld, for the first time, a being whom he could worship as his heart's idol, yet at the beginning Prudence had whispered, "Beware!" and he might possibly have listened to the warning voice, and fled from the temptation, had it not been for the ill timed meeting with his brother, whose heartless, world-wise marriage he looked upon with contempt as well as disgust, and, despising the interested motives that had led to such a union, rushed headlong into the opposite extreme. It is true he calculated upon keeping his own secret, and trusted to time and chance for a favourable *dénouement* ; but this is ever an

unsafe trust which, in nine cases out of ten, at least, will fail.

He was married at Munich. The ceremony was performed as privately as possible by an English clergyman, no one being present but the father of the bride, who saw nothing in this arrangement beyond the simple fact that his son-in-law did not wish his marriage to be announced in England until his return. It never once occurred to the single minded German to suspect that all was not as it should be, or that Reginald was not his own master, and the fair Agnes was too happy and too confiding to entertain either doubts for the present or fears for the future.

The wedding had been so quietly conducted that very few persons knew anything about it except those in the house where Mr. Riesberg and his daughter resided, but, among those few, was Camille Dupont, who lost no time in sending the news to Lyttleton Cray with a recommendation to export the promised cake immediately, saying that

he was afraid he should otherwise miss the opportunity of assisting at its demolition, being in hourly expectation of a summons from his uncle to join him at Marseilles, *en route* to Guiana. Three days afterwards the expected summons arrived in such haste that the young man had barely time to make the necessary preparations for departure, and forgetting all else in his hurry and confusion, went off without taking leave of his new relations, if so slight a connection might be termed relationship, so that the fact of his intimacy with Lyttleton Cray remained unknown, and, as no danger was apprehended from that quarter, the young Frenchman was soon forgotten altogether.

About this time Reginald received a letter from England of a most alarming character. It was badly written, badly spelt, and without signature, but he was at no loss to divine that its author was the grey headed old butler, Jacobs, at Culverley, who had always been very much attached to him, and as he was sure the old man would

not have taken such a step without very sufficient reason, it caused him the more anxiety. The letter was a curiosity in its way, and although not a masterpiece of the caligraphic art, deserves to be recorded for its genuine simplicity and honest feeling.

"Honnerd Sur,—Mister Reynold, I hope you will pardon this libberty, but you had better cum whome to look after your own rites and propperty seeing your father has had another fit and I'm afeard ain't long for this wurld, and I'm also feard there's sumthing goin' on, that ain't for your good. I won't name names, but if you was ousted you see it would be all the better for some other folks—I don't say who. O, sur, why didn't you cum whome with your bruther when you was both sent for in such a hurry after your farther had the first fit. Sur Rejnold was orfully put out about it, pertickler as you haven't cum yet, and he a dying may be. Mister Littleton tends to him night and day, and, God forgive me if I am wrong, but I cannot help misdowting he has his reasons. O sur! strange things are sed. Sur

Rejnold has herd somehow that you are goin' to be marred, and he was like mad and sent for Loyer Flours to make his will, which bodes no good for you sur; but Loyer Flours perswade him out of it, and to write you a letter, which so he did, and Mister Littleton sed he would take it to the post himself. I hope you got it sur. I saw it on the table, and made bould to coppey the address, and that's how I cum to rite to you. O Mister Rejnold, pray do cum whome sur, or else there will be sad mischef for ther's other loyers besides Loyer Flours in the wurld, and pray excuse me for not sinin my name and for the libbertey of ritin, and I remain Honnerd Sur your faithful servant to command."

There was quite enough in this extraordinary epistle to excite both alarm and suspicion. That Lyttleton was acting a treacherous part towards him was sufficiently obvious, as were also his motives in so doing. He was playing a deep game for a large stake, and might possibly win—then what would be the consequences? Reginald

had scarcely the courage to ask himself this question, much less to answer it. His father's illness had been purposely concealed from his knowledge—that was clear; a letter, too, was mentioned in the anonymous epistle as having been written by Sir Reginald at the instigation of the solicitor; he had never received it, therefore it must have been intercepted—and by whom?

These facts, combined with the obscure hints given by his humble correspondent, placed the character of his brother before his eyes in a truer point of view than he had hitherto beheld it, and he started like one who comes suddenly upon an adder couched in the long grass. It was a fearful predicament in which he stood; still he flattered himself that, whatever might be suspected, the whole truth could not possibly be known, and if he could but prevent a discovery of his marriage, and convince his father that he had not been guilty of any intentional neglect, all might yet be well. There was no time to be lost; but he could not go

without taking his wife with him: a measure that involved risk as well as difficulty; however, there was no alternative, and, after much anxious consideration, he resolved not to disturb her present happy tranquillity by a disclosure which circumstances might render altogether unnecessary, but make some plausible pretext for his hasty departure, and trust to fate for the rest.

Agnes found but one cause to regret leaving the land of her birth, for would not he be by her side whose presence was all-sufficient to render the dreariest spot on earth as beautiful as the Garden of Eden in her sight? Her single sorrow was the parting from her beloved father, who had been so long accustomed to depend on her care for all his little household comforts; but, as the worthy musician entertained a project of fixing his abode in England at no very distant period, the grief of both was softened by the belief that this was only a temporary separation.

It was a difficult task for Reginald to keep up his spirits during the journey, nor did he so entirely succeed but that his wife could not help seeing at times certain signs of depression that were scarcely accounted for by the hackneyed plea of headache, and, for the first time, a vague suspicion crossed her mind that his marriage was unauthorised, and would bring misfortune upon him. The thought came like a blighting wind over a bed of summer flowers, crushing and withering all the hopes and joys that had so lately sprung up and blossomed in her heart; yet there was no selfishness in the melancholy forboding of evil which, in spite of her endeavours to shake it off, still haunted her imagination, but it came in this simple form, "he will be unhappy, and I shall be the cause."

She forgot that, whatever troubles might come upon them, she would have to bear her part; or if this truth found any place in her thoughts, it was only remembered as the prelude to a wish that she could take

upon herself the whole of the burden. As soon as they arrived in London, Reginald's first impulse was to pay a visit to his grandfather, but a little reflection told him it would be a wiser step to see previously the solicitor, Mr. Flowers, who could, in all probability, put him in possession of the real state of affairs at Culverley, and whose advice might be of infinite service. The two gentlemen were almost strangers to each other; so much so that Mr. Flowers did not immediately recognise his visitor, who was ushered into his private office by one of the clerks, to whom he had not given his name; therefore, he had to announce himself, and the moment he did so, he saw, by the expression of the lawyer's countenance, that his fate was sealed. Mr. Flowers put out his hand in silence, and, as Reginald took it, he said, in a faltering voice—

“I fear I am come too late.”

Mr. Flowers made no reply, for he did not know what to say; but his averted eyes, his distressed looks, and the signs of

compassionate feeling visible in every feature, told the tale as plainly as any words could have told it, and the unhappy young man knew that his father was no more, and that his inheritance was gone from him. It was a moment of intense mental agony, yet he could not at once realise the full extent of his misfortune, for poverty was, as yet, to him a mere phantom, terrible, indeed, but shapeless, indistinct, and unreal; he had never felt its frozen touch, he did not know how icy cold it was, but a strange sensation of faintness came over him, his eyes grew dim, and he trembled from head to foot.

"Sit down, my dear sir, and try to compose yourself," said the kind-hearted lawyer—"this sudden shock is too much for you, I see. A glass of wine will revive you perhaps."

And, so saying, he applied his forefinger to the wall, just above his chair, on which a small door, that nobody would have suspected of being a door, flew open, disclosing to view several bottles, glasses, and various

alimentary delicacies of a solid description, presenting altogether a most bachelor-like appearance, that is to say, looking particularly comfortable. Hastily pouring out a large glass of sparkling Burgundy, he made Reginald drink it off, then, replacing the glass in its secret cell, he closed it by another magical touch, and his cave of hidden treasures was then as impervious to prying or pilfering mortals as that of the forty robbers in the eastern tale, whose doors would only unfold themselves at the bidding of those who had been initiated into the mystery of the cabalistic pass word, "open, sesame!"

In a few minutes Reginald, having recovered in some measure from the first effects of the blow, and aided, perhaps, by the stimulant so judiciously administered, felt himself able to converse with tolerable calmness, and then Mr. Flowers related the particulars of his last interview with Sir Reginald Cray, every word of which tended to confirm the wronged heir in his previous opinion of his brother's nefarious conduct.

"I always knew him to be cold and selfish," he said; "but I never supposed he was so utterly base and void of principle."

"Selfishness is very apt to make men void of principle," observed the lawyer; "but the question we have now to consider is, what you are to do?"

"God alone knows!" exclaimed the young man, despairingly. "I have no resources, no profession, and a young wife looking to me for support and protection."

"Ay, there's the deuce of it—but I can scarcely imagine, Mr. Cray, that the case is so bad as you seem to apprehend; there will surely be some sort of provision made for you. —There was a good deal of personal property—I know that your father had large sums vested in different concerns that are paying very well; and though your brother may have superseded you as heir, it does not follow that he is to take everything. I hope you will find that what would have been done for him as the younger son, is done for you. Sir Reginald

would hardly be so unjust as to cut you off entirely. I should advise you to go down to Preston, and see the man who made the will ; his name is Bolton ; he does not bear the best character in the world, but that is of little importance ; you can insist upon seeing the document, and then you will know how you stand."

"I will go to Culverley," said Reginald, with a sudden burst of animation ; " why should I hesitate to face the spoiler ? It is he who has cause to fear the meeting—not I."

"But what advantage do you propose to yourself by such a visit ?"

"The advantage of showing that I know and despise the arts that have been practised to defraud me of my right."

Mr. Flowers shook his head.

"I fear you will gain very little by that, my good friend. We know that you have been set aside by an unjust act, but it is a legal one, nevertheless, and believe me, for I have had more experience of the world

than you have, it is hardly worth while to subject your own feelings to any very severe trial in the hopeless attempt to make a bad man feel any compunction for his evil deeds whilst he is in the full enjoyment of their success. But there's Lord Milburn, and supposing the worst, will he do nothing?"

"I never was a favourite with my grandfather; he will probably be glad of this opportunity to disclaim all further connection with me. I have often heard him say it was a pity Lyttleton was not the eldest."

"Well, I would try him, at any rate; there's no telling how this change may have worked, and there is one thing in your favour: they cannot legally deprive you of the baronetcy; the title is yours, and descends to your heirs."

"A poor heritage!" replied Reginald, with a faint smile.

"It may be of importance one of these days," returned the lawyer. "I do not advise you to assume it under the present circumstances; in fact, I think it better

you should not; but your claim to the distinction ought to be borne in mind, and made known hereafter to anyone whom it may concern."

"You mean to say that if I should have a son, though he may be a beggar, it would be well for him to know that he has a right to put 'Sir' to his name if he chooses," said Reginald, rather bitterly.

"Certainly: every man ought to know what he is justly entitled to. But we need not discuss that point now: let us think of what is, not of what may be. You will go at once to Preston?"

There was a slight degree of embarrassment in Reginald's manner, as he answered—

"Yes, I think so."

And the quick perception of the lawyer instantly traced it to the right source.

"But you cannot take your wife with you! that would be awkward," he said.

"I cannot leave her here; she is a stranger in England, and knows scarcely a word of the language."

"She speaks French, I suppose."

"Yes, perfectly."

"Then I think I can relieve you from that difficulty. My sister, one of the best creatures in the world, is a single woman and lives alone. Now, nothing delights her so much as to have a visitor who will let her talk bad French from morning till night, and tell her it is very good: it is her weak point; and if Mrs. Cray will consent to stay with her till your return, I am sure Mary will try to make her comfortable, and I dare say they will get on amazingly well together."

This friendly proposal was warmly acknowledged and gratefully accepted, on condition that the hostess elect should second it, which her brother seemed to have no doubt about. In short, he had so settled it in his own mind, for he was truly interested in the fate of the unfortunate pair, and willing to assist them as far as he could, but his ability so to do was very limited, for, beyond advice and sympathy, he had

little to bestow. Advice and sympathy ! how few of us there are that estimate these benefits at their real value !

Slowly and thoughtfully Reginald went back to the hotel, meditating on the painful task before him of undeceiving his young wife, who had followed him so lovingly and trustingly to the land wherein she was a stranger, believing that he had a home and a portion there which she was to share with him. How, then, would she bear the terrible disclosure he had now to make? Would she not hate, despise, upbraid him? He did not know the giant strength of a woman's fortitude in the hour of trial—it is often a staff good and true that supports a man under the heaviest afflictions, a rock of refuge when his bark is tossing on the troubled sea, to which he clings with renewed courage till the storm is passed.

She was writing a letter, but put it aside as he entered the room, and fixing her eyes anxiously on his face, said—

“You look ill, dearest Reginald; some-

thing has happened to distress you. What is the matter?"

"Yes, I am ill, Agnes, very ill: wretched and sick at heart."

He sat down on the sofa, looking indeed wretched and sick at heart; for even the spark of hope awakened by the lawyer's view of his affairs had died out again, and he felt himself an outcast, a wanderer without a home.

Agnes rose from the table on which her unfinished letter was lying, and, seating herself by his side, said gently, "Your father, love; what of him?"

Reginald turned his eyes mournfully towards her, then, with hollow voice and quivering lips replied, "He is dead."

The despairing tone in which these words were uttered, seemed to confirm all her previous fears. It was, then, as she had suspected; he had offended by his marriage, and his father had died unreconciled to him. Still she knew not what the consequences might be of such alienation—

"Tell me all, dearest," she said, earnestly; "your sorrows are my sorrows; we must have neither good nor ill apart from each other."

"My poor Agnes, you little know what the ills are that you will be called upon to bear. What would you say if I were to tell you that you had given yourself to a ruined man, a discarded son, a beggar without a shilling?"

She comprehended the whole truth at once, and throwing herself into his arms, answered softly—

"I would say, my husband, my beloved, it is I who have brought this trouble upon you: let me be your comforter."

These loving words spoke peace to his heart, for he felt that, however dark and stormy might be his future passage through life's rough seas, in those gentle arms that were now entwined so fondly around him, he might ever look for a haven of rest.

CHAPTER VII.

It was a cold wintry morning, not bright and invigorating like some of the days at that season of the year, when the frost sparkles beneath one's feet as though the ground were strewn with glittering gems, when icicles hang around like crystal drops reflecting all the colours of the rainbow; when the trees are clothed in their swan's-down mantles of spotless white, and the bracing air seems to impart new life and energy to the frame. But it was a dark and dreary day, without frost, or snow, or

sun, and the bleak north wind was blowing with a dismal wailing sound among the leafless branches, which swayed backwards and forwards, as if the trees were waving their long bare arms to ward off the rude assailant. Light must be the heart, and free from care, that is not oppressed by a view of Nature in such mournful guise; and bitter were the feelings of the disinherited son, as he entered once more the gates of that domain of which he had been accustomed from infancy to look upon himself as the future lord. As he walked slowly and sadly along the broad avenue leading to the house, gazing upon the objects so painfully familiar that met his eyes on every side, he asked himself whether he was not under the influence of some terrible illusion.

"Am I awake, or am I only dreaming?" he said. "Can it be possible that I am an intruder here—a trespasser on my own land—a stranger where it is my right to rule? Oh, God, forgive me if I presume to murmur at thy decrees, but surely all this has

been taken from me without sufficient cause."

Then his thoughts reverted to the day when he had last traversed that same path to commence his tour, just eighteen months before. The summer was then at its height, everything was bright and glowing around him, and there was warmth and sunshine in his own soul where all was now as cold and drear as the aspect of the altered scene. With a trembling hand he rang the bell of the massive portal, which was opened by a smart liveried servant—not one of the old domestics of the establishment, but a man he had never seen before.

"Is Mr. Cray at home?" he inquired.

"Sir Lyttleton is within," replied the man, in a careless tone, and with very little show of respect, it being his private opinion that nobody of any consequence would be guilty of pedestrianism on such a day as this.

The form of the reply was so unexpected that it brought a momentary flush of surprise and indignation to the pale cheek of the visitor, who said, somewhat haughtily—

"Then tell *Sir* Lyttleton that I desire to see him."

"What name shall I say, sir," the servant asked, in a more humble tone than he had spoken at first.

"His brother, Sir Reginald Cray."

At this announcement the man opened his eyes very wide indeed, and stared with astonishment as Reginald strode unbidden through the hall, and entered a small room that used to be his own private apartment, where he had often spent whole mornings in his favourite pursuits of reading, drawing, and composing verses. Not one of his books or sketches was there now; it seemed as if everything that had belonged to him had been purposely removed, for even the furniture was changed, and the only vestige that remained of its former master was a gilded cage, in which he had kept a favourite bullfinch; it was now tenanted by a gaudy parrot. He had plenty of leisure to note all these circumstances as he awaited impatiently the expected interview, for nearly

a quarter of an hour had elapsed before any one appeared.

At length, he heard the voice of his brother's wife in the hall, and the next instant that lady presented herself, with a stately air, and in the coldest, most distant manner imaginable, requested to know the motive of a visit so unlooked for.

"And so little desired, I believe, madam," he replied, with equal coldness, "but my business is with your husband; it is he that I must see."

"Your tone is rather peremptory, sir," she replied, haughtily; "but it will not answer your purpose. In short, Mr. Cray, you must be aware that it would be extremely unpleasant to your brother to meet you at all under the present circumstances; therefore he desires that whatever you have to say, may be communicated through me."

"That which I have to say, madam, can be said to no one but the man who, it seems, has not the courage to face me; the cowardly spy who, by what means I know

not, has dishonourably thrust himself into my affairs, and made use of the knowledge thus basely acquired to rob me of my birth-right, and bring my father's malediction upon me in his dying hour."

"For that, sir, you have yourself alone to blame. Was it your brother's fault that you thought proper to disgrace your family by forming vulgar connections? You did not consult him—your marriage was your own act, and the consequences of your brilliant choice are only such as you might have expected."

To this Reginald answered indignantly—
"Madam, your sarcasms are misplaced, as I could easily show you, were I so disposed. But I did not come here to vindicate my conduct either to you or to your husband, nor would I insult my wife so far as to think it necessary even to deny your imputations; but let me ask whose act it was that kept me away from my father's death-bed, and what became of a letter he wrote to me with his own hand, which, if it had

not been basely withheld, would have brought me here in time to justify myself to him, and refute the falsehoods that were employed to harden his heart against me?"

"All this is really very absurd," said the lady, contemptuously; "the plain truth is this—it came to Sir Reginald's knowledge that you had married a person of low condition; he felt that you had degraded him as well as yourself; therefore, naturally, and very wisely, as most people would think, he determined that his estate should go to the son who had done honour to his name, instead of the one who had disgraced it."

In giving utterance to this insulting speech, the vindictive woman rejoiced in the feeling that this was her hour of triumph, and gloried in thus revenging herself for the mortification she had experienced on her first introduction to Reginald Cray, who replied with some heat—

"It is fraud and treachery that really dishonour a man's name; and whatever I

may suffer in consequence of my father's injustice, I would not exchange my position for ten times the worth of all this"—and he waved his hand around him—"if it were to be gained by such means as have been used by my brother to possess himself of my patrimony."

The lady was about to make some acrimonious reply, but Reginald stopped her by desiring to know whether his brother had actually refused to see him.

"He certainly has, sir; for he sees no good purpose it would answer, nor does he wish to have a quarrel forced upon him, and as that seems to be your object in coming here, he does quite right to avoid it."

"The excuse is a very poor one," said Reginald, and his lip curled with a smile of scorn; "however, so be it—I do not envy him the feelings that prompt him to shun the man he has so deeply injured. But there is one thing he will not dare to refuse—I have a right to examine my father's will, and that right I shall insist upon."

"You are quite welcome to see it, sir; nobody will try to prevent you. Perhaps you intend to accuse my husband of forgery in addition to the other charges you have been pleased to bring against him."

"Even that would scarcely be a greater crime than the deception that has led to the same end," said Reginald, bitterly. "However, madam, I have no intention of disputing the validity of the will, but it is not likely that I shall tamely resign all claim to my birthright, without even seeing the document by which alone it can be taken from me. At present I have nothing to rely upon but the bare word of those whose word is not sufficient security, that any such document exists, or, if it does exist, what are its provisions."

"You can satisfy yourself on both these points," she replied. "Mr. Bolton has the will, and I have no doubt he will show it to you, if you desire it; but I fancy," she added, with a sneer, "the sight will hardly repay you for the expense and trouble of

the journey. And now, sir, if you have no farther commands, we may as well put an end to this very unpleasant conference."

"I have not the least wish to prolong it, madam ; but there is still one thing I would say : you may tell my brother that, although the power and the right may be given him to rob me of all else, his assumption of my title is a usurpation, and I shall treat it as such."

"Very well, sir," replied the lady, with insulting calmness. "Is there any other information you would wish to favour him with ?"

"No madam, for I perceive it would be useless. I came here to ascertain whether I had wronged him either by word or thought—the reception I have met with is a sufficient answer to the question ; and I will now relieve you from my unwelcome presence, but there may yet come a time when the remembrance of this hour will be as bitter to you as its endurance is now to me." A scornful smile was the only reply vouch-

safed by that proud, unfeeling woman to these prophetic words, which, lightly as she regarded them at this moment of gratified malevolence, in after years were fully verified.

And so the supplanted heir of Culverley went forth, an exile from his paternal mansion, not knowing where to find a home, or how to obtain the means of subsistence. As he retraced his steps through the park, and felt that he was leaving it for ever, the pride that had enabled him to maintain his dignity and composure in the presence of his haughty sister-in-law, gave way to a natural burst of grief. "He lifted up his voice and wept." Truly might he have said: "Behold, and see if there be any sorrow equal unto my sorrow." The hope he had cherished of finding himself placed, at least, above the horrors of absolute destitution, was fast forsaking him, and the terrible question—terrible, because unanswerable—"What am I to do?" pressed heavily upon his mind, weighing it down to the lowest depths of despondency.

"My dear, I think you had better order up the ham and the cold grouse pie, and decant a bottle of sherry. I shall ask him to do us the honour of taking his lunch with us."

And, leaving the good lady intent on hospitable cares, he bustled down into the office to receive, as he supposed, his distinguished visitor.

Great, then, was his disappointment on beholding a stranger, whose mourning habiliments and gentleman-like bearing told at once who he was, notwithstanding his haggard and travel soiled appearance.

The bland smile instantly vanished from the short rubicund face of the fussy man of business, whose thoughts reverted uneasily to the instructions he had just left with his amiable helpmate, as to the opening of a bottle of sherry, and saying hurriedly to the unexpected visitant. "Sit down, if you please; I'll be with you in half a minute," he ran up stairs to put a stop to Mrs. Bolton's proceedings in that matter.

Having explained to the lady that it was

only the poor brother, consequently that it would be a waste both of substance and civility to offer refreshments to so unprofitable a guest, he again descended to the office, where Reginald was pacing to and fro, not having deigned to avail himself of the seat that had been so uncourteously offered.

"Now, sir—your business with me," said Mr. Bolton, with a defiatory air, that might have impressed any third person with a notion that he expected an assault, and was prepared to defend himself to the last drop of his blood.

Briefly, and without preface, Reginald stated the object of his visit, which did not seem to allay the suspicions of the wary attorney that hostilities were intended, for he still appeared to hold himself on the defensive, as he replied—

"The will?—oh!—ah!—but I don't know that I am justified in letting you see it without the authority of my client."

"Your client would scarcely dare to re-

fuse, sir ; or, if he did, I should find means to enforce my demand. My purpose is simply to read my father's will, that I may know by the evidence of my own senses, whether it is really such as I am given to understand, and, as his eldest son, I am entitled, I imagine, to this satisfaction."

"Yes, yes, certainly—with the concurrence of the principal parties—but, you see, I am responsible for the safety of the document, and——"

Reginald interrupted him with a look of ineffable disdain.

"Sir," he said sternly, "bring as many witnesses as you please, to see that I neither swallow the paper nor put it into the fire, if that is what you are afraid of ; but I must and will know that if I am to be dispossessed of my estate, it is by a legal act to which I must of necessity submit."

"There can be no question as to its legality, Mr. Cray. There was no entail ; the late baronet was the purchaser of the property, and had the right of disposal by will or otherwise, at his pleasure."

“I am perfectly aware of his right to do so, but I cannot be sure that he made an unjust use of that right, without better proof than the mere assertion of the persons chiefly interested; therefore, sir, I desire to see the will.”

Mr. Bolton fidgetted about the room, uncertain what to do; for he was somewhat overawed by the commanding tone of the applicant, yet could not divest himself of a certain degree of fear that some violent attempt would be made to destroy the deed. At length he opened the door of another room, and invoked a kindred spirit by the not very euphonious name of “Gribble!” on which a tall, thin, rather threadbare individual made his appearance, and to him thus spoke the superior power—

“Unlock that box, Gribble, and give me out Sir Reginald Cray’s will.”

The clerk unlocked a ponderous iron chest, and took therefrom a folded parchment, which he handed over to his master, and was about to re-ensconce himself in his

own particular cell, when he was stopped by the cautious man of business, who said, with affected carelessness—

“Oh, you may as well stay, Gribble, while this gentleman looks it over, then you can put it back again.”

Having thus cleverly contrived to secure a witness, he unfolded the will, and spread it out on the table before Reginald, who now seated himself uninvited, and attentively perused every line of the important testament which had so cruelly changed the current of his life. It was in vain he looked for even the most trifling aid towards his maintenance; no such provision was made; everything was bequeathed in the most unequivocal terms to his brother, and, as if to make assurance double sure, the hard unnatural decree terminated in the following clause—

“To prevent any misunderstanding or dispute with regard to this—my last will—I furthermore declare that, as my eldest son, Reginald, has married without my consent,

and contrary to my wishes, he has thereby forfeited all right and title to any share of my property of every description whatever, and also of any future interest in the same."

"It is enough, sir," said Reginald, rising; "my business with you is finished, and I wish you good morning."

"Good morning, sir!" returned Mr. Bolton, opening the door with officious haste, rejoicing in his heart at getting rid so easily of one who, to use his own elegant phraseology in discussing the affair afterwards with Mr. Gribble, he had feared might "turn out an ugly customér."

Reginald walked slowly away from the house. All was indeed over now; the last lingering spark of hope was extinguished, and his cup of misery full to the very brim.

The heavy clouds were still sending down a small, sharp, drizzling rain, and the wind blew in fitful gusts along the street, causing the few foot passengers who were abroad to hurry towards their homes. Cold, weary, and faint from long fasting, Reginald went

into the nearest inn, to wait for the London mail and procure some refreshment, for so long as we are sojourners upon this earth, though the spirit may be crushed and the heart all but broken, nature ordains that we shall still minister to that existence which has become valueless, nay, even burdensome; yet, until he began to eat of the things set before him, and to feel the vivifying influence of the warm, cheerful blaze, the exhausted traveller did not know how much he really stood in need of warmth and food, or that mere physical comforts, though they cannot alleviate mental suffering, may give us more strength and courage to bear it. Such experiences were new to him then. They became more familiar in later times, when frequent privation gave tenfold worth to every trifling superfluity, and the luxuries that had surrounded his youth were no longer remembered or expected as things necessary to make life endurable.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHEN he again reached the great metropolis, after his long and fruitless journey, Reginald found, to his horror and dismay, that he had not a single sovereign remaining. Strange as it may appear, he had been so totally unaccustomed to consider the possibility of being without money, he could hardly realise the fact. He had spoken of beggary, indeed, but the word had hitherto taken no definite form, had conveyed no distinct idea to his imagination; it had floated before him like some hideous phan-

tom of the night—a spectre conjured up by nervous fears, that would vanish into air with the first gleam of light; but it was now a frightful reality, standing with him, face to face, over which he had no power, and from whose presence he could not fly. Again he asked himself the appalling question—“What is to be done?” and again he felt how vain was the attempt to answer it. Mr. Flowers had counselled an appeal to his grandfather, and on this advice he now determined to act, not so much in the expectation of deriving any benefit from so doing, as because he considered it due to his own character to exonerate himself from the imputation of having wilfully neglected his father in his dying hour. Feeling an unaccountable dread of meeting Agnes again after this complete failure of his expedition to the north, from which he could not help fancying she had hoped much, it was a relief for the moment to find a reason for even the short respite the writing of a letter would afford him; and thus, as men are apt

to do, he deceived himself into a belief that there was a necessity for the delay, when, in fact, there was only a pretext. He went into an hotel to perform his task, which occupied above an hour, for the epistle was a long one, and very explanatory. It was not a begging letter—he was too proud for that—but it was such an one as must place his conduct in a fair light, and show that he was more sinned against than sinning. He did not hesitate to declare his thorough conviction of his brother's perfidy, in having designedly concealed from his knowledge the alarming state of his father's health, of which he must have been aware when they parted in Germany, he mentioned the interception of a letter written by Sir Reginald to himself, at the instigation of his solicitor, which Lyttleton had undertaken to send, and, also, that he had reason to believe the latter had tampered with a youth at Munich to obtain such information respecting him (Reginald) as might be used to his disadvantage with his father.

"It is true," he said; "I married without his consent, and, so far, I confess I was in error; but if an opportunity had been afforded me of removing from his mind the false impressions he had received with regard to my wife and her family, I cannot believe that he would have acted as he did. He might have been displeased—he might have given free utterance to his displeasure—but he would not have broken the natural tie between us—he would not have cast me aside so entirely. This was done under a delusion, forced upon him for the worst of purposes, that I had degraded my family by uniting myself to a woman of low birth and vulgar education. This was the fault I was accused of—this was the crime for which I was disinherited. Yet nothing could be more untrue, for my wife is as accomplished as she is beautiful; her father, though poor, is descended from a noble race, and her mother was the daughter of a baron. You, my lord, who are so well acquainted with the peculiar tendency of my father's preju-

dices, will readily admit that these circumstances, had they been properly represented to him, might have had the effect, at least, of mitigating his displeasure, and would, in all probability, have saved me from this severe and unmerited infliction."

He then spoke of his brother's refusal to see him, his usurpation of the title, and the haughty, insulting demeanour of his wife; and, lastly, he desired to know how he was himself hereafter to stand with relation to his grandfather, whom he had never voluntarily offended, and whose influence, if exerted on his behalf, might procure him some appointment that would relieve him from his present embarrassed position, and secure to him the means of living, at least, respectably.

Having dispatched this letter, he proceeded to the office of Mr. Flowers, who received him very kindly, and expressed more sorrow than surprise at the event of his journey.

"I did venture to hope," he said, "for

a better result; but, never mind, we must make the best of it, and I think we have hit upon a plan amongst us that may set you all right, if you can but make up your mind to it. By the way, your wife is one of the most sensible, as well as charming young ladies I have met with for a long time, and, if I had been in your place, I should have acted precisely as you have done. You see, I presume upon my fifty-seven years to make no secret of my admiration."

"And your sister?" Reginald asked, anxiously.

"My sister! Oh, she is as much charmed as I am. They are, as I prophesied, the best friends in the world, and now to business. During your absence, we have been laying our three heads together to meet this emergency—holding a committee, in fact, of 'ways and means;' and we have adopted certain resolutions that only wait for your ratification to be carried into effect. But, before I propose them to you, I must stipulate that you will pardon a liberty I have

taken on the presumption of your approval."

Reginald was deeply moved by the extreme kindness of this, to him, comparative stranger, whose genial warmth of heart gave new light and life to his benumbed faculties, as the sun, shedding its rays on the icebound stream, bids it flow smoothly on again.

"Whatever you may have done, sir," he replied, "can, I am sure, call only for my gratitude, and I hope you will believe that I am truly grateful. Such a friend, at a time like this, is indeed invaluable."

Mr. Flowers smiled, and shook his head as he answered—

"I am afraid, Mr. Cray, you are overrating the very little service it is in my power to render you; but all that I can do you may freely command. The case is this: my friend, Hallet, the printseller, who is a man of taste, and a very liberal fellow into the bargain, is rather fond of patronising young artists, who show signs of any peculiar talent. It is a hobby of his, and he might

have a worse. Now, the night before last, as we three—I mean my sister, myself, and your wife—were holding our cabinet council, Mrs. Cray exhibited a folio of your sketches, which struck me as being so good, though I am not much of a judge, that I induced her to let me show them to Hallet, and ask his opinion. He says they are decidedly clever, and that if you were to turn your attention to drawing, as a profession, he has no doubt you would succeed.”

“I am afraid there is more of flattery than truth in that view of the case,” replied Reginald. “Such attempts may pass very well as the productions of an amateur artist, but as a professional one they would hardly bear criticism.”

“Well, I think we must acquit him of flattery, at any rate,” said Mr. Flowers, goodhumouredly, “for he has commissioned me to ascertain whether you are willing to part with the drawings just as they are, as he would gladly give you fifty pounds for them.”

A momentary flush, partly of surprise, partly of wounded pride, passed over the features of Reginald Cray at this proposal. To a mind as delicately constituted as the sensitive plant that trembles and shrinks at every touch, there was something at the first glance painful and humiliating in the idea of receiving money for these sketches, which had been made as a gentleman's pastime; but the pang was scarcely felt ere it was gone, and a smile of joy lighted up his countenance as the better thought predominated, that a prospect of present relief and future independence was opened to him through the medium of his own talents.

"I will accept his offer," he replied. "I consider it a very liberal one: the sum is much greater than I had any idea they were worth; and if my grandfather should refuse to assist me, I don't know why I should not turn artist, if any good is to be done by it."

"There's no reason on earth why you should not. Depend upon it, Mr. Cray,

self-reliance is one of the noblest qualities of the human mind. A man should always be able to stand alone, and then if his prop chance to be carried away by an adverse wind, he does not fall. I am quite glad you see this in a proper light, for I feel sure that you will prosper and be happy yet."

Mr. Flowers did not quite feel the confidence he professed, but he thought it was the surest way to stimulate his young friend to exertion, and he knew that his natural tendency was to sink into inaction. Reginald's meeting with Agnes was, under these circumstances, a brighter one than he had anticipated. Her welcome was as joyous as if he had been restored to rank and fortune, and had returned to her the acknowledged heir of Culverley Rise. She threw her loving arms fondly around him, pressed her glowing cheek to his, and spoke so trustingly, so cheerfully, that he began to doubt whether his ills were not imaginary, and to ask himself if he had, in truth, any real cause for regret.

"We shall be very happy, dearest," she said; "happier, perhaps, than in a more exalted sphere. Shall I tell you, Reginald—yes, I may now—that the thought of your grandeur terrified me; and I have often, often wished that you had been born in a humbler station. If I had not loved you so well, I should never have had the courage to think of entering upon a life so unsuited to my taste, so different to the simple habits in which I had been brought up; and I am quite sure, love, that a little time will quite reconcile you to the change, and that you will have as many pleasant hours as you would have had if all this had not happened."

"But, my Agnes, I do not see my way to secure even a moderate maintenance. How we are to live, Heaven knows!"

"And Heaven will help us, love, doubt it not. We may live, not only in comfort, but in what will be to me perfect affluence. I and your kind friends—oh! how good and kind they are!—have arranged all that delightfully. You are to turn artist, and

I am to teach music and singing. Miss Flowers has already got the promise of three pupils, and she says I shall be certain to have as many as I can possibly take."

"You, Agnes—my wife—teach music and singing?"

"Yes dearest—why not? It is quite customary here in England—Miss Flowers tells me so."

"Yes, yes—it is customary—but I cannot bear the thought of it. I have determined to take up drawing as a profession—Mr. Flowers has advised me to do so—that is, if my grandfather will do nothing for me—but for you Agnes—you who had a right to expect I was bringing you to a luxurious home. Agnes—Agnes—it will break my heart!"

"That would be a worse misfortune for me, Reginald, than the loss of the wealth I never desired on my own account. If you do your part, I am content to do mine. It may hurt the pride of your family, perhaps; but, as they have left us to our own resources, we are not bound to study their feelings.

We must act independently for ourselves; and the way is made so easy for us, that it seems to me all pleasure instead of toil."

Reginald blushed with the consciousness that it was his own pride which had felt the shock, but he was ashamed to confess it, and mentally reproached himself for a want of that moral courage, which is generally stronger in woman than in man. Is it so ordained by nature that they should lean on each other for mutual support, the one being superior in moral, the other in physical power?

In the course of the day an answer arrived from Lord Milburn. It was exactly such as might have been expected—cold, concise, and unfeeling, yet smoothly worded, and in that polite style often used by great men in replying to the solicitations of humble applicants.

"Sir—I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your letter in reference to the will of your father, the late Sir Reginald Cray. No one can regret more than I do the unfortunate position in

which you are placed, but as the circumstances you allude to did not come within my own observation, you must permit me to decline giving an opinion upon them, or interfering in any way whatever in an affair that rests entirely between your brother and yourself. I am compelled to add that it is quite out of my power to assist you as you desire, and, also, that as any farther communication between us would answer no purpose, and might possibly lead to an interruption of the friendly intercourse at present subsisting between myself and Mr. Lytleton Cray, you will see the propriety of discontinuing so useless a correspondence. With all good wishes for your future happiness, I am, sir, yours very truly, MILBURN."

Thus was the last link broken of the chain that had bound Reginald to his kindred ; he cast the letter from him with disdain, and from that hour was an altered man.

CHAPTER IX.

Time heals the deepest wounds, and blunts the keenest edge of affliction; but there are limits to its influence, and in many cases it may teach the mind to forget its sorrows, yet not possess the power to restore it to its original tone, and such was its effect on Reginald Cray. He was an altered man, for the world had assumed to him a different aspect; the golden dream of life was past, and he looked back in sadness upon all that was gone, as the first of the human race looked back upon his lost para-

dise, when its gates were closed upon him for ever, and he heard the sentence pronounced that doomed him to toil for bread, in sorrow, all the days of his life. The occupation which had afforded great delight as an amusement to the rich man's heir, became irksome, even disgusting, at times, as a profession to the needy man, by which he must earn his daily sustenance, and, had it not been for the soothing influence of his wife's devoted affection, he would often have been tempted to throw aside his pencil in very weariness of spirit, and exclaim with the man of many sorrows—"Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life unto the bitter in soul?" At such moments as these, Agnes would cheer him with encouraging words, and gentle, loving smiles; and, as time wore on, the fits of despondency were less frequent, and less enervating, until at length, they were of rare occurrence, and the remembrance of what had been, was, even to himself, only as a tale that is told. Still he was an al-

tered man—he had grown silent and misanthropical—would shrink from meeting the eye of a stranger, and, to all but his wife and the excellent friend who had helped him in his greatest need, was cold, unsocial, and repellent.

The next ten years of his existence were chequered only by such events as might be recorded of millions of human beings who “fret and strut their hour upon the stage”—that vast stage where the scene is perpetually changing, and the actors, when they have played out their several parts, disappear, and are forgotten as others succeed them. And so it will go on to the end of time, even as it has been from the beginning.

Reginald only heard of his brother through the medium of the daily papers, from which he learned that Lyttleton had obtained a seat in Parliament, and was recognised by the world as a baronet—a distinction that was never disputed by the poor artist, whose claim to it was unknown, except to himself, his wife, and the friendly solicitor.

"If I should ever have a son," he once said, in talking with Mr. Flowers on the subject, "he shall know that the empty title will belong to him by right when I am gone; otherwise, the secret shall die with me." He never had a son. Three children, all of the opposite sex, were born, and died in their infancy; then, last of all, came Miriam, the heroine of this story, a lovely blossom, less fragile than the rest, that was spared to be his joy and blessing when all else was gone, and on that choice gift of Heaven the heart of the lone man rested at length in peace.

The ten years we have passed over with so brief a notice, had not been unmarked by such changes as take place in the natural course of things. Mr. Riesberg, the father of Agnes, was dead. He had come to England, and resided three years with his daughter and son-in-law, as contentedly as if they had been living in the utmost splendour: for no man could possibly be more free from ambition than the amiable musician, who

care, not whether his abode were in a palace or a cot, so long as he might make music therein. He died suddenly of that complaint, which so frequently terminates life without notice or suffering—disease of the heart; and never did a more sinless soul take its flight to the realms above, than that of poor Riesberg. Lord Milburn, too, was gone where all, sooner or later, must follow; and Reginald Cray, though scarcely yet in the prime of life, according to his years, was a grey headed care-worn man. And now again, “a change came o’er the spirit of his dream,” for the birth of the last child was the beginning of a new domestic affliction, that obliged him to abandon his occupation as an artist, for a more lucrative employment. His wife’s health gradually, but visibly declined; she lost her voice, and her hands became so tremulous from debility, that her musical talents were no longer available as a means of support; therefore on Reginald fell the whole weight of a care, which he found it impossible to sustain by the exercise of a

profession that barely sufficed for the maintenance of a single person.

In this difficulty, the friendship of Mr. Flowers, who was now growing an old man, exhibited itself in that practical manner which afforded the best proof of its reality. Amongst his clients was the chief partner in a mercantile house of high standing in the city ; a man whose benevolence was well known, and, as usual, very often imposed upon ; but he was wealthy, and the many instances of ingratitude and imposture he met with in the course of his charitable career, neither hardened his heart nor stayed his hand, the frequent, and, perhaps, not unnatural consequences of such disappointments.

To this gentleman, whose name was Roby, Mr. Flowers confided the principal circumstances in the history of Reginald Cray, with a view of exciting his interest, and obtaining some assistance for his distressed friend, nor was he disappointed, for Reginald soon afterwards received the offer of a situation

in a house belonging to the firm of Roby and Co., at Liverpool, where his chief occupation would be to conduct the foreign correspondence, a duty for which he was well qualified by his knowledge of the German, French, and Spanish languages. The salary was two hundred a year, and he most joyfully accepted a proposal that not only relieved him from his worst anxiety, but afforded him the opportunity he had for some time ardently desired, of removing his beloved Agnes from London, in the hope that a more salubrious air might renovate her strength, and restore the hue of health to her faded cheek. But the hope was vain; that bright hue never came again, and, although her spirit lingered with those she loved for nearly six years after the birth of her last child, as if to watch over the infant treasure that had made the world still dearer to her than before, nature was at length exhausted, and she passed almost imperceptibly from earth to heaven.

The little Miriam thus became the sole

object of her father's care and love, the only bond of union between him and his kind, and every hour of his leisure time was spent in amusing or instructing her. She had no other playmate, no other tutor, but was so fond of him that the greatest desire of her young heart was to have him constantly by her side, a desire he was able to gratify, as his business consisted principally in writing letters, which could as well be done at his own house as at the warehouse, where his presence was seldom required for more than one hour every day, so that he was more at home than most men who are similarly engaged. It was a small, detached house in which he resided, pleasantly situated at a short distance from the city, and one woman servant performed the several functions of housekeeper, nurse, &c., in addition to her legitimate duties as cook and housemaid; but she was a good-tempered, bustling body, and did it all very cheerfully, so that, humble as was the dwelling place, it was by no means comfortless. When

Reginald first came to reside at Liverpool, he had considered it advisable to adopt another name, as his own was well known all over the county in connection with the mills of which his father was formerly the owner ; nor was this all, for his brother was no stranger to the people of Lancashire generally, and if he had called himself Reginald Cray, the name would, in all probability, have led to remarks and inquiries he was most anxious to avoid, therefore he had taken his place in the counting-house as Mr. Bell, his real name remaining unknown to all except the head partner of the firm he served. Thus year after year glided by, and the little Miriam grew up happy in her solitude, as a rose might bloom in the desert, fostered by the tender care of some lone hermit, whose affections are withdrawn from all earthly things save this one isolated flower. She was as lovely in person as her mother once had been, and her beauty was of the same angelic cast. There were the dark blue eyes, so soft, yet so expressive of deep,

impassioned feeling; the calm, thoughtful look; the clear, brilliant complexion; the rich brown, golden tinted hair; all the gentle quiet graces that had first won for Agnes the love of Reginald Cray, who would sometimes gaze upon his fair daughter till time, and space, and all intervening misfortunes, seemed to be expunged from the map of his existence, and he could fancy himself again the clandestine lover, the expectant heir, so entirely did she resemble the beautiful being who had been the object of his early dream of love. The voice, too, had the same melodious sweetness, and, although she knew but little of music as a science, her exquisite taste and correct ear supplied the place of that knowledge so well that few would have discovered the deficiency.

Of her father's real name and history she was utterly ignorant, nor did she suspect that any mystery hung over either, for he had—perhaps wisely—determined not to reveal what might possibly give rise to unavailing regrets.

“Why should I disturb her contentment?”

it was thus he reasoned with himself, "by telling her of wrongs that cannot be redressed, of her claim to a station she can never occupy? Such a revelation could answer no good end, and it would surely be cruelty as well as folly to show her the eminence on which she ought to stand, having no power to place her there."

Such were the reflections that sealed his lips on the subject of his birthright, consequently Miriam only knew her father as Mr. George Bell, one of the clerks of Messrs. Roby and Co., merchants, of London and Liverpool; and this was all she cared to know, for she had never bestowed much thought on his lineage, having always taken it for granted that his parents were of no higher grade than himself, and feeling quite satisfied with the little information he had given her respecting them, which amounted only to this—that they both died before her mother came to England. He had occasionally alluded to the fact that his father left him nothing, from which she

inferred that he had nothing to leave ; so that the general impression on her mind, and she never questioned its truth, was, that her grandfather had been a poor man, and that her father had neither brother nor sister.

Reginald Cray possessed many admirable, many interesting qualities ; but there was one great defect in his character—it was, want of energy. The future prospects of his child troubled him, for he knew that, if he should die, she would be thrown on the world friendless and unprotected, with that dangerous gift of nature, transcendent beauty, which makes the path of a young girl so perilous when she has to pursue her way without a guide or defender. Yet, anxious as he was at heart, he took no measures to secure her against the evil of being left penniless in the event of his demise, or to make friends who might, at least, afford her some protection. Those in whom he could have trusted, the kindhearted Mr. Flowers and his amiable sister, were no more. They had numbered their full mea-

sure of three score years and ten, then sunk to rest in peace. Their departure had left the world in deeper shadow to the eyes of the melancholy man, whose morbid distaste for society from that time perceptibly increased, so that he repelled with coldness all advances towards intimacies that might have ensured friends for his daughter, even whilst he was contemplating, with anxiety and dread, the too great probability there was, that she would need them at some future period. How inexplicable it is, and yet how true, that we often create the evils we fear by failing to exert those powers of mind which God has given to all his creatures for their own behoof! And so it was with Reginald Cray, who was constantly forming plans he had not the resolution to carry into effect. Sometimes he thought of asking for an increase of salary, that he might be enabled to save something from his slender income, as a future provision for his daughter. Sometimes he made up his mind that the best thing he could do was to

insure his life; but the former was humiliating, and the latter difficult, insomuch as he had no means of raising the premium that would be required, but by a system of economy he had not enough of moral courage to adopt. Nevertheless, he continued to meditate on the subject, always saying to himself that something must be done, and fancying that he should certainly act upon that conviction as soon as he could make up his mind what was the best thing to do; but there were always difficulties in the way of every thing that suggested itself as a means of carrying out what he really believed to be his intentions—difficulties that, with a more energetic character, might have been overcome, but that to him were insurmountable.

CHAPTER X.

So time went on, and Miriam had attained her sixteenth year, a child in experience, a woman in firmness of character and strength of principle. She had known but few cares as yet, for her heart was in her home, and she scarcely bestowed a thought on the world beyond it, which to her was a dream land, where all was strange and devoid of interest. She believed in her father as the perfection of human nature; he had not a single fault in her eyes, whilst her imagination endowed him with every good and

noble attribute of which man is susceptible. Her greatest ambition was to make him happy, her constant study how she might best contribute to his pleasures, little dreaming there was a perpetual well-spring of sadness in his heart, that filled it to overflowing with bitter waters, leaving no room for pleasure to find even a temporary abode; yet he would smile on her gentle endeavours to enliven him, and sometimes affect a cheerfulness to which his heart had long been a stranger, that she might feel satisfied her efforts had not been made in vain.

Surely there is no love amongst mortals so pure, so beautiful, so nearly resembling the love which ascends in faith and truth to Heaven, as that of an affectionate daughter for a beloved parent! and with Miriam this filial devotion mingled itself with every thought, was the mainspring of every action; her very existence seemed bound up in his, she had not a wish apart from him, nor did she ever contemplate the likelihood of their being separated by the unsparing hand of

the great destroyer, until he was seized with that fatal disorder which deprived him of sight, and ultimately caused his death.

It was a severe illness which, for many weeks, held him, as it were, hovering between this world and the next, and it was during that time of trial that Miriam, who was then only sixteen, began to reflect on the possibility of losing him for ever. The melancholy thought, having once gained an entrance, was seldom absent from her mind, nor did she seek to banish it thence, but rather sought to acquire such true Christian fortitude as would enable her to bear, with submission, the heavy dispensation, whenever it might come. Day after day, as she watched by the bedside of the sufferer, noting every change that flitted over his altered features, her heart often throbbed with a suddenly excited fear that the moment of the dreaded calamity was approaching, and when the alarming symptom had passed away, she would silently utter a fervent prayer, that the awful summons might be long delayed.

"Miriam, my child," the sick man sometimes said, "I wish you would take a little more rest; you will be worn out with this incessant watching."

"No, dearest father, I am not at all tired; I feel quite strong and well, for you know I lie down every night."

"That is right, my darling, but I am afraid you do not sleep much."

"Oh! yes, indeed I do—I only wake just to give you your medicine, and to see that you want nothing."

And, with such assurances as these, he was satisfied; for illness is apt to make us all more thoughtful of ourselves than of those about us, and the comfort of the invalid depended so entirely on his daughter's unremitting cares, that he readily gave credit to her assertion that she felt no fatigue. At length all the worst symptoms of the disease were subdued, he was pronounced out of danger, and, by degrees, partially recovered his health, but his sight was gone for ever. From the time this sad truth was

ascertained; the character of Mirian seemed to take a loftier stand. All the nobler attributes of her nature that had lain hidden beneath a timid, gentle exterior, were now developed by the necessity for exertion. She had new duties to perform, new difficulties to contend with; the protection she had been accustomed to receive, it was now her part to bestow; for the helplessness of childhood had fallen on the strong man, whose mental, as well as bodily powers, were considerably weakened by the shock his nervous system had sustained; but she went through her allotted task with heroic firmness, and never did filial affection assume a holier or more graceful form, than in the devoted, self sacrificing attentions of that young girl to her afflicted father. Although he was totally incapacitated for business, they were secured against absolute want by the benevolence of Mr. Roby, who, having been made acquainted, in confidence, with the private history of Reginald Cray, interested himself to get a pension settled upon

him by the firm, of one hundred pounds a year, and Miriam made such judicious arrangements for the management of this stipend, that her father felt no difference from his usual mode of living.

His greatest enjoyment was to hear her read or sing, which she never wearied of doing for his amusement, and often, as he reclined on the sofa, listening to the rich, mellow tones of her voice, he quite forgot the calamity that made her ever ready to exert those powers which gave him so much delight. There was a vast fund of happiness, too, in being the sole object of such anxious, untiring attentions, from one so dear, and the blind man sometimes asked himself whether he had not, in reality, more cause to rejoice than to repine? In their daily walks Miriam never failed to beguile him into forgetfulness of his bereavement, by describing, in a lively manner, all that passed, or was seen around them, so that he could fancy he actually beheld the objects she brought so vividly before his

mental vision, and, in imagination, the long disused pencil was in his hand, pourtraying the ivy mantled tower of the venerable church, standing in relief against the clear, blue sky; or, perchance, some magnificent old oak that had stood in its strength for centuries, and been witness to the passing away of many generations of human beings, who had sported in childhood beneath its sheltering arms, and sat there still when age had silvered their locks, and their grandchildren were playing around them, wondering that the tree looked no older than it did in their youth.

These were, perhaps, the happiest days Reginald had experienced since his banishment from his natural home, for he was in that state of debility which is apt to deaden all feelings, beyond the desire for present gratification.

One day Miriam was reading the paper to him as usual, when she came to a paragraph beginning thus—

“We understand that Sir Lyttleton Cray,

the honourable member for W——, is dangerously ill at his seat, Culverley Rise, owing to a fit of apoplexy, which is likely to terminate fatally."

"My God!" exclaimed the listener, with a sudden start that caused his daughter to throw down the paper in alarm, and fly to his side.

"What is the matter, dear father—are you ill?"

"No, my child, it is nothing, only a slight spasm; it is gone now."

"But you look so pale, and you are trembling all over; I am sure it is something more. Do you feel faint? shall I get you anything?"

"No, no, love—there is no occasion—I am quite well now, so go on with your news."

Though scarcely satisfied with his assurance that he was quite well, she resumed her task, commencing with some other piece of information, for she had totally forgotten, in her fright, where she had left off.

"That is not what you were reading, my dear."

"Is it not? Then it must have been this—'The appointment of the new Bishop of London——'"

"No, child, no. It was something about the dangerous illness of one of the members of Parliament; a fit of apoplexy."

"Oh, yes—here it is!" said Miriam, wondering why her father should appear so much interested in what seemed to her to be of so little importance to him. However, she made no remark, but read—

"We understand that Sir Lyttleton Cray, the honourable member for W——, is dangerously ill at his seat, Culverley Rise, owing to a fit of apoplexy which is likely to terminate fatally. There is a rumour afloat that a certain nobleman of anti-liberal principles, is already canvassing for the borough, in anticipation of its becoming vacant, and another report says—though, for the sake of common humanity, we hope it is without foundation—that the eldest son of the pre-

sent representative has intimated his intention of starting in opposition to the noble lord, in case of an election."

As Miriam concluded this, to her uninteresting piece of information, she again raised her eyes to her father's face, which still betrayed signs of some powerful emotion she was wholly at a loss to account for, but, as he seemed desirous that it should be unobserved, she let it pass without question. Nevertheless, the incident left a strong impression on her mind that there was some mysterious connection between him and the place or the persons mentioned, that it was his will to keep secret, even from her; and she read the paragraph several times over to herself, that she might keep it in her memory.

All that day he was more silent and thoughtful than usual, a deep sigh at times escaped him, and once or twice a tear rolled down his sunken cheek, coming unbidden from a source that had long been frozen up in his heart. The familiar mention of names,

unheard for many years, carried him back in spirit to scenes that had lost all semblance of reality, and were scarcely distinguishable from the vague, shadowy recollections of some distant dream, till thus suddenly recalled, with all the freshness of the events of yesterday.

Other thoughts, too, mingled with these memories. His brother was at the point of death; he had received the awful summons to appear before that Great Judge from whom no secrets are hid, and was about to lose all for which he had so grievously sinned. Was his conscience awakened? Did he think with remorse, in this dread hour, of the brother he had so deeply wronged?

It might be so: and oh! how gladly then would that injured brother have knelt by his dying bed, and joined in his prayers that his sins might be forgiven.

"He has been my worst enemy," he said to himself, "but I freely pardon him now for all he has done. A dying man is no fit

object for resentful feelings, and the Lord has said—"Thou shalt forgive thy brother his trespasses against thee"—"not only seven times, but until seventy times seven."

Such were the reflections of this amiable, high minded, suffering man; and for many days his thoughts were constantly wandering towards his boyhood's home, with the longing of an exile for his native land; but his own rapidly increasing ailments soon rendered him insensible to everything else, and poor Miriam could not blind herself to the truth that he was wasting away inch by inch, and that neither care nor medicine would long be of any avail. He was too weak to bear the sound of the piano, or even to listen for more than a few minutes at a time to the readings that had helped to charm away so many of the tedious hours of illness; his voice grew more feeble and his step more faltering, so that his walks were gradually shortened, until at length they were given up altogether.

It was at this period that some great cri-

sis in the commercial world caused the failure of several houses of high standing, and one of the first on which the ruin fell was that of Roby and Co. So unexpected was the blow to the chief partner of the firm, that his reason gave way under it, and the beneficent hand that had so often been stretched forth to save others from sinking beneath the burden of their miseries, was lifted, in a moment of insane despair, against his own life. Thus, the only friend that had remained to the sightless victim of adverse fortune, was suddenly taken from him at the time when he most needed his kindly aid, but he never knew it, for the fatal intelligence was communicated in a letter addressed to Mr. Bell, which Miriam concealed from him, as it merely stated the facts without comment, the sole object of the writer being, it seemed, to give notice that the pension must be stopped until the affairs of the house were wound up. Poor Miriam! how was she to meet a misfortune such as this, rushing as it did suddenly upon her

with the overpowering force of an avalanche? still she saw at once how necessary it was to hide the truth from her father, who fortunately was asleep when the letter came, so that she had time to recover in some measure from the first effects of so great a shock, and to consider what would be the best course to take. There were serious difficulties even at the moment to contend with, for she had but little of the last remittance left, and when that should be gone, how was she to provide him with even his daily food? Had he been in health she might have sought some employment, but he was so helpless and dependent, he required such constant personal attendance, and, like a child, was so fretful and impatient if she left him only for a single hour, that it was not to be thought of. There was not one being on the face of the earth to whom she could turn for advice or assistance; she must think and act for herself in this trying emergency, or rather for him who was infinitely dearer than self, that

idolized parent whose race was almost run. Still the thought that predominated over all others was, that he must be kept in ignorance of what had happened, and she maintained sufficient command over herself to converse with her usual serenity and cheerfulness."

"It will be time enough," she said to herself, "when necessity obliges me to make this terrible disclosure; for, be it when it may, the truth will be known only too soon, and every hour of pain and sorrow that he can be spared may add an hour to his life."

And the tears fell thick and fast as she thought how rapidly that life was passing away. Yet not a thought of what her own future was to be mingled with her heartfelt sorrow. It was the separation that she dreaded—for what would the world be to her when he was gone? A dreary wilderness, without love, or light, or joy. But she had little time for the indulgence of grief, her mind being entirely occupied with the anxious care of shielding her beloved

father as much as possible from the evils of poverty so unlooked for. Her plan for the present was speedily arranged. In the first place she persuaded him that his health would be benefited by removing farther from the town, to which he assented with all that eagerness for change so often exhibited by invalids in the last stage of consumption; then she engaged a single apartment in a very humble abode, some distance from Liverpool, and, having sent to it such articles of furniture as were most needful for her father's own personal comfort, she sold the rest without his knowledge, leading him to suppose that all was gone to their new dwelling, and that the accommodation there was not confined to one room only, a delusion that was the more easily kept up as he now required to be watched by night as well as by day. It was a very poor place, little better than a mere hovel, tenanted by two women, mother and daughter, who earned a scanty livelihood by getting occasional employment at a factory, when extra

hands were wanted. They were very quiet, orderly persons, and glad of the trifle they gained by giving up the only decent room in their abode to their lodgers, for whom they were willing to do any little menial service for a very small requital.

If the loss of sight can, in any case, be esteemed a blessing, it certainly might be so under such circumstances as those which now surrounded Reginald Cray. It was a veil drawn by the merciful hand of Providence over objects that, had they not been hidden from his view, would have disturbed that happy tranquillity he was permitted to enjoy during the last few hours of his existence.

Miriam earnestly desired to obtain medical advice for him, but how was it to be done, since she had not the means of paying a doctor, if she were to send for one, and she could scarcely hope, in a strange place, where he was unknown, that any professional man would give his attendance without the customary fees. He had expressed no

wish on the subject himself, perhaps feeling that he was past the aid of medicine, but his daughter was so anxious about it that she had almost resolved to write to the physician who attended him in the illness that caused his blindness, although she hoped but little from so doing. But she was spared the pain that would have attended the refusal or neglect with which such an application might have been received, by one of those apparently accidental circumstances which, though trivial in themselves, often lead to the most important consequences, and perhaps have an influence over our destinies to the end of time. It happened that one of the women in whose house Miriam and her father were located received some hurt while at work in the mill, and owing to this accident, she was obliged to stay at home for a few days, and was visited by Mr. Thornton, the parish doctor, who could scarcely pass in and out of that small abode without seeing all its inmates. He beheld with compassionate interest the

death-like countenance of poor Reginald Cray, as he reclined on his couch by the window, and had noted the youth and beauty of the young girl who attended on him, and then he made inquiries as to who and what they were. Now Mr. Thornton was a man admirably fitted for his vocation, being one of those good Samaritans who could not see a stranger dying, apparently for want of assistance, and pass by on the other side. He spoke to Miriam about her father, and tendered his professional aid, which was most thankfully accepted by the grateful girl, who told him, without reserve, how they came to be reduced to such extreme necessity, and how anxiously she had endeavoured to conceal from her father that it was so. Mr. Thornton, a pleasant, good-humoured looking man, more like a farmer than a doctor in appearance, listened with much interest to the recital, then said in reply:—

“My dear child, you have done wisely and well. Let him know nothing, if you.

can help it, that would in any way distress his mind, and keep him as quiet and as much amused as you can. I will see him every day, and will take care that he shall have whatever medicines are requisite to compose and keep him free from pain. You need not trouble yourself about expenses. I shall not encroach upon your purse for anything I may do; but it will, perhaps, be as well to let my patient suppose that I shall send in my bill some time or other—it will make him feel more satisfied."

Thus kindly and considerately did Mr. Thornton constitute himself the medical attendant of the dying Reginald; for, although he saw from the first that his case was hopeless, he knew that he might be saved by proper treatment from a great deal of suffering; besides which, he considered that it would be a consolation to the young girl, when all was over, to know that he had not died for want of the physician's care. The daily visits of the benevolent doctor afforded great pleasure to the

invalid, who lingered on for many weeks, quite unconscious that he was indebted to charity, not only for the medicines he took, but for most part of the nutriment that, day after day, kept the vital spark from becoming extinct; and so gradually, so almost imperceptibly did the light at length go out, that when the last breath, after quivering for an instant on his lips, was borne away into immeasurable space, it left a smile so calm and holy, that anyone who looked on those tranquil features might well have asked—
“Can this be death?”

CHAPTER XI.

On the same day, and about the same hour that Reginald Cray was released from mortal bondage, death visited also the spacious halls of Culverley Rise, and laid his cold hand on the usurper there. It was one of those mysterious dispensations that we, in our short sightedness, are apt to ascribe to chance; but ought we not rather to believe that all events over which man can exercise no control, are ordained for some wise purpose that passeth the narrow bounds of human understanding? It was in a large,

darkened chamber, magnificently furnished with every luxury that might contribute towards the ease and comfort of a sick man, that Lyttleton Cray was laid on his death-bed, awaiting, with all the terrors of one who is conscious of having sins of vast magnitude to account for, the approach of that unwelcome visitant who chooseth his own hour, and will not be denied. But the rich draperies that hung around him, the pillows of down that supported his head, the soft luxurious sofa with its velvet covering, the costly wrappers of quilted and embroidered silks, to throw over his wasted form, the Indian screens carefully placed to prevent the slightest breath of wind from coming near him; all these things were unheeded by the wretched man, whose every thought and feeling seemed absorbed in the dread of death. He had been made aware that there was no chance of his recovery, still he tried to deceive himself into a belief that the physicians might be mistaken, for he had not reached the age when men must natu-

rally look to die : his fiftieth year was scarcely overpast. But it was all in vain that he sought for hope in such deceptive reasoning ; he felt that his career was almost over, and the nearer the end approached, the more he recoiled with horror from the awful, inevitable change. It was not remorse that made his death couch a bed of thorns, for his heart was as hard at the last hour as it had been throughout the whole of his life ; but his fears were those of a man who has lived wholly for this world, and finds himself compelled to think for the first time of that which is to come.

He had been a fortunate man in all outward seeming ; his riches had been increased, his ambition gratified by a place amongst the legislators of the country ; he had walked the earth proudly, and received the homage paid to his wealth as a tribute to his own personal importance ; still he was as far from being happy as the brother he had defrauded, for it is not the purple and fine linen, nor the sumptuous fare of the rich

man that can give peace to his mind whilst evil passions hold their empire over it.

He had inherited all the worst qualities of his father, without any of those redeeming points of character that had given Sir Reginald a certain degree of popularity amongst the lower classes of the surrounding districts, especially his own tenantry; for, although his failings were great and manifold, avarice was not one of them, and he had won many a good word by his lenity towards the small farmers on his estate, and his frequent charitable donations to the poorer people, which, even if they proceeded, as in truth they did, more from ostentation than benevolence, were not the less beneficial, nor the less thankfully acknowledged.

But nobody had the like cause for grateful acknowledgments during the reign of his successor, whose meanness became proverbial, and who never was impelled to acts of charity by any motives whatever. No Christmas beef and ale emanated from the

“Great House,” as it was called by the rustic population, to gladden the hearts of the poor at that festive season, when all should have cause to rejoice, as was the custom when his father ruled supreme, and his mother was the Lady Bountiful of the village; there was no annual distribution of coals and blankets—no alms-giving in coming out of the church on Sundays, as was a practice with the late baronet; whilst, as a landlord, the present proprietor was so harsh and exacting, that his tenants were often reduced to the utmost straits, that the rent might be ready at the proper time, and there was not one of them but execrated the name of Sir Lyttleton Cray in his secret soul. To none but his wife was it known how he had become lord of the domain, as it was generally believed that his brother had died abroad, unmarried, during his father’s lifetime, consequently he enjoyed the credit of having succeeded in right of legitimate heirship both to the extensive property he had acquired by artifice, and

the title he had unlawfully assumed. Yes, there was one other who knew it, and that was Mr. Bolton, the lawyer, of Preston, whose interest it was, and had always been, to preserve the secret, which, therefore, was not likely to transpire through any want of caution on his part, and he was now the sole depositary of another little hidden affair, confided to his keeping by his late client, of which Lady Cray was yet in ignorance.

But if Sir Lyttleton acted the tyrant over his dependents, he was himself obliged to submit to a species of tyranny that was infinitely more galling, for his wife was no gentle dame, and took full advantage of her own high connections, and her knowledge of the nefarious conduct that had elevated him to his present position, to hold him completely in check. Not that she disapproved of what he had done, but she did not forget that he had attempted to keep her in the dark, and that, in all probability, she never would have been enlightened as

to the part he had played but for a letter she had received immediately after his departure from Paris from her nephew, Camille Dupont, which put her in possession of the facts Lyttleton had intended to withhold, and gave her a clue she never ceased to follow up until she had made herself acquainted with the whole of his proceedings. She could treat lightly, and even commend, his duplicity towards others, but that he should dare to deceive her was quite another thing, and her resentment was as deep as it was lasting. She knew that he who has once deceived may deceive again, and the thorn of suspicion was perpetually rankling in her heart, engendering there a venom that was ever overflowing in bitter taunts and malicious innuendoes.

In their frequent altercations she never failed to make some contemptuous allusion to the ignoble race from which he had sprung, not that she attached any very great importance to the circumstances of his ancestry, except as they afforded her a means

of annoyance always within her reach, as he was particularly sensitive on that point, however callous he might be to any observations touching his own evil deeds, which might well have called the blush of shame to his cheek. To remind him that he was the son of a manufacturer was gall and wormwood to his proud spirit, and the pill was all the more bitter to swallow, inasmuch as his lady could claim the advantage of a long pedigree, containing many noble names, and but few that were not graced, at least, with the distinctive term "honourable," which, it may be observed, did not always strictly accord with certain anecdotes related of some of them. Lady Cray's father was one of these "honourables;" the younger son of a lord, and in virtue of that relationship, without a penny beyond his pay, as major in a cavalry regiment; but his capacity for getting rid of money was not quite so limited as his means of obtaining it, consequently he was always deeply in debt, and his daughter had, from an early age,

lived in a most unenviable state of dependence amongst his relatives.

She had almost begun to despair of being released from this worst kind of servitude, when she happened to attract the attention of an eccentric individual, who, in point of age, might have figured as her grandfather, and was, moreover, deformed in person, and of a very forbidding aspect. But then he possessed the wonderful talisman that gives grace to deformity, and beauty to the most unsightly features; he was very rich, and the young lady declared she did not think him disagreeable by any means. The truth was, she entertained a very decided opinion that the prospect of becoming a wealthy widow was better than that of remaining a portionless maiden, therefore she married with a devout wish that her bridegroom might not outlast the honeymoon. However, he was in no haste to quit the world, and, contrary to all human calculation, lived seventeen or eighteen years longer, to the infinite disgust, no less than

disappointment, of his wife, who, during the whole of that long period, was subjected to the most jealous surveillance, and very frequent upbraidings; still, as she had her point to gain, she was wise enough to keep on good terms with the old gentleman, who died at last, leaving her a handsome fortune, though much less than she had reckoned upon, for he had thought proper to bequeath the half of his wealth to build and endow an hospital, and had likewise left several legacies to relatives with whom he had held but little intercourse, one of these being his sister's orphan son, Camille Dupont.

This unexpected alienation of so large a portion of his property was a great disappointment to his widow, who considered herself very ill paid for the sacrifice of all the most interesting part of her life, and nothing could exceed the detestation in which she held the memory of her late lord, excepting, perhaps, her utter abhorrence of all charitable institutions whatever—a distaste which appeared to extend itself to every

other species of charity within the range of human benevolence; for, whatever might be the distresses of the poor villagers, either from sickness, poverty, or accidents of any kind, they were seldom known, after the death of Sir Reginald Cray, to seek relief at Culverley Rise. Owing to the monstrous ingratitude of "the abominable old fright," as she frequently styled the deceased Mr. Drummond, her widowhood was not quite so brilliant an era in her life as she had fondly anticipated, especially as she was somewhat more advanced beyond the bloom of youth than she had hoped would be the case, when fate released her from those fetters, which were certainly not made of roses.

She had been a widow about six months when she first met with Lyttleton Cray, who found favour in her sight for two reasons, the one being that he was as unlike her departed husband as man could be to man; and the other, that the striking contrast would give her many opportunities of throwing back in the face of the world all the

small shot that had been fired at her vanity during her thralldom, on account of the miserable specimen of humanity with whom she was mated.

Nevertheless, she did not decide upon so important a measure without previously taking into consideration all the arguments that suggested themselves both for and against the gentleman in question who, as a younger son, was decidedly objectionable, but then she was perfectly aware of the unpleasant fact, that she had arrived at that time of life when it was hardly to be expected that anything short of the riches of the Lydian king would suffice to purchase a combination of all the desirable qualities she would have wished to find in her future partner, therefore she wisely considered which of them she could best dispense with, and the result of her deliberations was, that the youth and personal advantages of Lytleton Cray outweighed the rank and fortune of a certain French count, who was far from handsome, and rather older than herself.

Such being her views and sentiments, it may easily be imagined that she was not displeased at finding herself, after the death of Sir Reginald, the mistress of a splendid domain, with a title appended to her name; but, unscrupulous as she was, as to enjoying all the advantages of her husband's iniquities, she, like a skilful general, used her knowledge of them to establish and maintain her own supremacy, for she well knew there was nothing he stood so much in fear of as an exposure to her grand relations, it being entirely owing to their influence that he held his seat in parliament. This was the secret of that absolute dominion exercised by Lady Cray over her liege lord, which excited the wonderment of all those who were acquainted with his violent over-bearing temper; and the only way of solving the problem was by supposing that she was endowed with similar attributes in a more liberal proportion, a supposition that increased the fear and dislike with which she was generally regarded. Two sons were

born of this marriage, the evil fruit of a corrupt tree, and the elder of these was now twenty-seven years of age, the other two years younger; but of them we shall have more to say hereafter.

The sacred beams of filial love shone not around the death-bed of Lyttleton Cray. No gentle hand smoothed his pillow, or held the cooling draught to his fevered lips; no soothing words of affection fell softly on his dying ear, taking away its bitterness from the last painful hour; no tearful eyes watched his changing countenance and shortening breath; but it was a hired nurse, who sat or dozed by his bedside through the long hours of the night, caring less for his comfort than her own; and even during the day his wife passed but little time in the sick chamber, always saying that the quieter he was kept the better; and the same excuse was made available by the two young men, who did not "see the fun" as they termed it, of staying in doors all day to wait for what might not happen for a week. And so it

came to pass that when Sir Lyttleton Cray drew his last breath, his sons were indulging in boisterous mirth on a race course, and his lady was gone out in the carriage to take the air.

CHAPTER XII.

It is now our business as well as our pleasure to introduce the reader to another branch of the same stock, which, at a period long past, was transplanted to a foreign clime, where it had taken root and flourished more luxuriantly than it might perchance have done on its own native soil. More than half a century had elapsed since the former proprietor of Culverley, Sir Reginald Cray, had shared with three brothers the not very large property left by their father; and he, being the eldest of the four,

succeeded to the ownership of the Ashton Cotton Mills, such being the will of the deceased, who was a decided enemy to partnerships amongst brothers. The others being therefore but scantily provided for, betook themselves to different parts of the world with the laudable view of improving their fortunes, and two of them were never again heard of by their relatives; but the one whose family is connected with this narrative, settled in the West Indies, where he married, and in course of time became a rich man. He was, however, no worshipper of Mammon, but, in the midst of his abundance, remembered with gratitude the source whence it flowed, and dispensed blessings around him with no sparing hand. He was happy, too, in his domestic life; for he was an excellent husband and father, his wife was truly "a crown unto him, and his children like the olive branches round about his table." Mr. Cray kept up a regular correspondence with his brother Sir Reginald; but having formed new ties that were dearer

to him than any in England, he never revisited his native country. One of his daughters, Elinor, was a distinguished beauty, notwithstanding the rich, dark mellow tint given to her complexion by a tropical sun, which had deepened its hue without injuring its transparent brilliancy. Her eyes were very dark, large, and lustrous; her long, redundant silken tresses black as the raven's wing; her well-formed figure tall, elegant, and graceful, with a peculiar air of dignity that made her father sometimes playfully call her Queen Elinor. But these graces were in her girlhood somewhat impaired by a certain degree of hauteur in her manner that, under ordinary training, would in all probability have grown to intolerable pride; but, instead of being left to take its course, it was carefully watched and affectionately checked by her excellent parents, whilst every better quality of heart and mind was drawn forth and cultivated with the utmost solicitude, so that she became a very fascinating and

truly estimable woman, in spite of the natural tendency of a disposition that might have made her far otherwise. She married, at the early age of eighteen, an English gentleman of good family named Ballantine, who was possessed of a considerable property in Jamaica which he had inherited from his mother, and since her death he had resided chiefly in that island, paying, however, an occasional visit to England on account of his family connections there.

The Ballantines lived in great splendour; their house was a palace, and all around it like fairy land, for no expense was spared by its munificent master to render the abode of his beloved Elinor a terrestrial paradise, and so far as the most beautiful combinations of art and nature could aid him to achieve the work, he perfectly succeeded.

Although he was an Englishman, Mr. Ballantine would have been well contented to pass the rest of his life in this delightful home of his own creation, but he was anxious that his children should be educated in

England, and he could not bear the idea of entrusting them to the care of any but their own natural guardians. Out of seven, two only had survived their infancy, a boy and a girl, who were treasured by both parents as gems of inestimable value, and for their sakes Mrs. Ballantine reconciled herself to leave the land of her birth, and the beautiful home where she had spent fifteen years of married life, the happiness of which had been uninterrupted, except by the loss of her children. Her mother had long since paid the great debt of nature, but Mr. Cray was still living, and, before she gave her final consent to settle altogether in England, she exacted a promise from her husband that he would accompany her to Jamaica every alternate year, to pay a visit to her father, but, ere the time for the first voyage came round, Mr. Cray had ceased to be. Alfred, the elder of the two children, was at this time a fine, manly, handsome boy, about ten years of age, of a most warm-hearted, generous disposition, quick feelings,

and lively temperament. Elinor, who was his junior by two years, and a decided beauty, such as her mother had been in her early youth, had inherited also her mother's innate pride, and with her it grew with her growth, and strengthened with her strength, so that, even at that early age, she had begun to regulate her conduct towards her young companions according to the rank of their parents.

The Ballantines were no sooner settled in London than they received a visit from Sir Lyttleton Cray, whose appearance and manners, for he took care to make himself especially agreeable on the occasion, produced so favourable an impression on both Mr. and Mrs. Ballantine, that they readily accepted an invitation to spend some weeks at Culverley Rise, and from that time an intimacy was kept up between the two families. Sir Lyttleton's sons were two or three years older than the young Ballantines, who did not look upon them with much affection, for they were rough, ill-tempered,

unmannerly boys, often quarrelling with each other, and extremely rude at times in their behaviour towards their better bred cousins. Then Alfred, who was the very personification of truth and honour, soon discovered, and told his sister, with a mixture of surprise and contempt, that the Crays thought no more of telling a lie than of whistling a tune, declaring, at the same time, that he did not like to have much to do with such fellows, to which the little lady haughtily responded—"No, I should think not, indeed." Fortunately, however, he was not called upon to have much to do with them, for the young people saw but little of each other, as the Crays were at Eton school, and Alfred Ballantine, after being duly prepared by an able tutor, continued his studies at one of the Universities. Miss Ballantine received the usual amount of accomplishments that are expected to grace the young ladies of the present age, from the most eminent masters of the day; and as she was by no means blind to her

own personal attractions, and knew that her fortune would be considerable, she did not fail to set a high, perhaps a just, value on herself. She was about seventeen years of age when the whole family was plunged into the deepest affliction by the sudden and accidental death of Mr. Ballantine, occasioned by a fall from his horse, which he survived only a few days. For many months after this terrible bereavement his widow secluded herself from all society excepting that of her children, and then it was she first found the essential difference between the genial warmth of Alfred's affectionate heart, and the perfectly proper, but cold, unimpassioned demeanour of his sister. Often, when the silent tears were falling down her pale cheeks, Alfred would start up with a sudden impulse, and throwing his arms fondly round her, kiss them away, while he murmured in her ear words of comfort and consolation that caused her to smile again, and thank Heaven for having left her at least one inestimable blessing.

During the first year of her widowhood she received several pressing invitations from Sir Lyttleton and Lady Cray, who set forth, in the most enticing colours, all the advantages of a change of air and scene, and said every thing that might induce her to take up her abode for a time at Culverley Rise. In replying to these solicitations, the unhappy lady indeed gave her relatives more credit for kindness than was their due, not suspecting for a moment that they had been calculating the probable amount of Miss Ballantine's fortune, in considering whether she would not be an eligible match for one of their own hopeful sons. But, in projecting such an alliance, they were, to quote a homely proverb, "reckoning without their host;" for, even if the young lady had been inclined, which she was not, to favour their views, neither of the brothers were likely to be so disposed, for they had taken a violent dislike to both their cousins; declaring that Alfred was a conceited prig, who thought nobody half so good as himself, and that

Elinor was insufferably proud, vain, affected, and in every way disagreeable. She had, in truth, a great deal of pride, which she did not think it necessary to disguise; neither had she taken much trouble to conceal her opinion of the two Crays; and as it was anything but a flattering one, this carelessness might account for the little love they bore her. Mrs. Ballantine recovered, by slow degrees, her usual health and tranquillity, resumed her former habits, and for the sake of her daughter rather than from inclination, again appeared in the high circles to which her husband's wealth and family connections had introduced her, and where she was so eminently calculated to shine. The world said she had quite got over her loss, but that was one of the numerous errors which the world, judging always from external signs, is apt to fall into; for the memory of him she had truly loved and deservedly honoured was cherished in the inmost recesses of her heart, and if a regal crown had been laid at her feet, she

would have said, "It tempts me not! My husband still lives to me in the spirit, and I wait to share with him the crown of immortality."

More years went by. Miss Ballantine was married to a young nobleman who ranked high in the social scale, and was thereby elevated to a position that suited her aspiring tastes; whilst her brother found sufficient occupation for his time and thoughts in the management of the West Indian property, which obliged him to pass a part of every year in Jamaica. The bright promise of his boyhood had been fully realized. The noble qualities that had marked the fine, intelligent, open-hearted youth of fifteen, were equally conspicuous in the high-spirited, generous, and remarkably handsome young man of five and twenty. Courted and flattered by the gold-worshipping world, it was hardly in human nature to escape a slight dash of self-sufficiency. The only wonder was that he had so little of it; much less, indeed, than many of fewer pre-

tensions. He happened to be in England at the time of Sir Lyttleton Cray's death; and he it was who, from one of the mourning carriages in the baronet's funeral train, caught a glimpse of poor Miriam as she was following her father to the grave, and exclaimed aloud, "What a beautiful creature!"

CHAPTER XIII.

On the morning after her father's burial, Miriam arose from her humble couch with heavy heart and aching head, oppressed by a more complete sense of her desolate condition than she had felt until this first day of her total bereavement, for, so long as the inanimate form was there, and she could look upon those loved features in their calm repose, she did not seem so utterly alone as now that all was gone. Still she busied herself mechanically about the little arrangements of the room as she was used to do,

and then prepared her solitary breakfast—a very poor repast, indeed, for it consisted only of a little milk and water, with some dry bread, and a small piece of fish that the woman of the house had given her; but she bestowed not a thought on the wretchedness of the fare; she was wondering where she should find a home in this wide, wide world, and whether peace and joy would ever smile upon her path again.

One little ray of light was visible amid the surrounding darkness, like a pale star glimmering faintly through an opening of the black clouds as they roll heavily along a stormy sky.

Mr. Thornton had promised to pay her a visit that morning; he had spoken, too, of seeing what could be done for her, which sounded almost like a promise of assistance, and on this hope, slight and uncertain as it was, she leaned with a fear and trembling of its giving way, scarcely to be understood by those who have friends and relatives anxious for their well being.

She had dreamed of the grand funeral that crossed her way on the preceding day, and, in the wild phantasma of a night vision, the dead had changed places, and it was her father who was carried with so much pomp and circumstance to the tomb. She saw his coffin, followed by a train of mourners, borne in state through a magnificent hall, where she was sitting on a throne covered with black, and, as the procession passed by, every one bowed his head lowly and reverently before her. Then the scene was changed to a spacious vault, lighted with innumerable tapers, and the coffin was placed at the head of an open grave, the mourners standing round it, when a solemn chant rose slowly on the air, growing still louder and louder, till she awoke with a start of terror, and, as soon as she could collect her senses, found that some children were singing the "Morning Hymn" in a neighbouring cottage. This accounted for the sounds she had heard in her sleep, yet the vision left a strange and indelible im-

pression on her mind, and, superstitious as she felt it to be, she could not help seeing in it some extraordinary revelation. Why might not dreams, she thought, be sent now, as in days of old, to herald future events? Then she accused herself of presumption, and tried to shake off such thoughts, but they still haunted her imagination, as she sat with her face buried in her hands, ruminating on the present and the future.

At length she started up, as if actuated by some sudden impulse, and, unlocking a small box that seemed filled with letters, took from it a morocco case containing a finely painted miniature set in gold. It was the only thing of value she had retained in her necessities; every trinket, every superfluous article of clothing that could be converted into money had been parted with, but this was a sacred treasure that she had preserved through all; and, as she gazed wistfully upon it, she seemed trying to recall some image of the past.

It was the portrait of a young man just

entering into the summer of his age, with a fine, intellectual countenance, large, deep blue eyes, that looked full of poetic inspiration, a high forehead, smooth and white, displayed by the parting of the fair hair, worn rather long and slightly curling, and a small, delicate hand, adorned with rings, apparently of value. The costume was the elegant but unstudied morning dress of one in a superior grade of life, and he was half reclining on a sofa, with a book in his hand, though his eyes were directed upwards, as in meditation.

Miriam was so completely lost to everything else in the contemplation of this picture, that she did not hear the doctor enter the room, her face being turned from the door; and, as he felt curious to know what it was that had the power to engage her attention thus deeply, he approached in silence, and, looking over her shoulder, was rather surprised at what he saw.

It is wonderful how many ideas may pass through the mind in the brief space of a

few seconds; the speed of lightning falls far short of the speed of thought, and, ere he could have spoken three words, Mr. Thornton had shaped a little history in his own mind relative to this mysterious portrait, which caused a rather dubious smile to hover round his mouth, as he said, in a peculiar tone, that at any other time might have called a blush to the young girl's cheek—

“A very fine-looking young man, indeed, Miss Bell.”

At the sound of his voice she turned quietly towards him, without manifesting any signs of surprise or confusion, and putting the miniature into his hand, her eyes glistening with tears, said—

“You would hardly think that was my father.”

The smile vanished instantly from his face, and his tone was quite altered, as he replied—

“I should not, indeed. Do you remember him anything like it?”

"Yes, I have a faint recollection that, when I was quite a child, I knew it to be him. It was done before he was married, and was then, I believe, considered a very good likeness."

Mr. Thornton looked at it attentively for a long time without speaking, but his thoughts were busy concerning the original of the picture, and he sighed over the uncertain fortunes of mankind, as he contrasted the aristocratic form and face before him with the poor blind man he had attended in charity.

"A hard fate, indeed," he said to himself. "This man was evidently a gentleman—everything about him here shows that he did not belong to the commonalty. Surely they could be no ordinary circumstances that occasioned such a reverse as this; it must be a history worth knowing."

Then speaking aloud, he said, "I think you told me your father had been in Roby's house for upwards of twenty years. But what was his occupation before he went

there? Was he brought up to any profession?"

"I think not, sir; I never heard him say so."

"Do you know anything about his family? what was his father?"

"I never knew what he was, for he died long before I was born, and I always fancied my father had some reason for not liking to speak of his parents, so that I seldom asked any questions about them."

"They were English, I suppose?" he asked, looking again intently at the miniature.

"Oh, yes; they were certainly English, and I believe they were not in very good circumstances, as I have often heard my father say he was left without a shilling."

The doctor mused for a while, then said—"And did it never strike you, my dear child, that this," and he pointed to the picture, "does not look like the son of a man who had not a shilling to leave him? Has it not sometimes crossed your mind that he

might, at least, have been entitled to rank as a gentleman?"

"I never gave it a thought, sir," replied Miriam; "nor did he ever even hint as much to me."

"Well, perhaps he was wise; and, after all, it is but a conjecture on my part, and may be very wide of the mark. So now let us talk about your affairs, for that is the business that brings me here this morning. You must think of doing something for yourself now; and the question is, what that something is to be. Can you teach anything? What do you know—I mean in the way of accomplishments?"

"Not much, I am afraid; I can speak French and German, and I know a little of music and drawing."

"The deuce you do! French and German! where in the world did you pick up so much knowledge?"

"My father understood those and other languages quite well. He had a great deal of talent, too, as an artist, and was very

fond of drawing before he lost his sight. It was he who taught me all I know."

"Good God!" exclaimed the doctor, whose previous ideas were now almost confirmed. "And he to be reduced to such a strait as this!" Then, perceiving that Miriam was in tears, he took her hand kindly, and said in a gentler tone—"But he is happier than either you or I, my child, and it matters not to him now where his race was ended. I wanted to find out how I could help you, and I think you have given me the right clue. You must begin the world as a nursery governess; I suppose you will not object to that?"

"Object? oh! no. But who would take me from such a place as this?"

"That is exactly what I am going to tell you. I am attending a lady who lives about five miles from here, the wife of General Keith, of Newland Hall; do you know Newland Hall?"

"No, sir, but I have heard it is a very fine place."

"Yes, it is a fine place—the general is a rich man, and his lady is a very agreeable person. They often have visitors at the hall, and they are now expecting some friends from London, who will bring down two or three children with them, to stay some considerable time. There is a nurse coming, but they will want somebody partly to take care of, and partly to teach, the two elder ones; so, if you think you would like to undertake such a charge, I have no doubt I can settle the business for you at once."

This fair prospect of a home, with the certainty of possessing, at least, one kind friend, lightened the young orphan's heart of half its load of care, and her gratitude was expressed in that simple, unaffected manner which was the best proof of its sincerity. The good doctor was much pleased at her ready acquiescence in his proposed plan.

"But you must see Mrs. Keith yourself," he said, "and the sooner the better—you can go by the railway, and there is a station

within half a mile of the house." Then, glancing at her attire, he added—"She knows how you are situated; have you no black dress to put on, my dear?"

The question brought a crimson glow to Miriam's cheek, and her voice trembled as she replied—

"I have not. Do you think it is of any consequence?"

"Hem!—Why, yes, I do—certainly," said Mr. Thornton, whose knowledge of the world told him that it was of very material consequence as regarded the success of her application, what sort of appearance she presented, and this unforeseen obstacle perplexed him not a little. Both were silent for awhile; but, at length, the poor girl said, in a dejected tone—

"Then I cannot go."

"That won't do, either," answered the doctor. "We must not lose so good a chance for the want of a gown. I'll tell you what I'll do—I'll get home as soon as I can, and talk to my wife about it—I dare say

she will be able to find something that will do ; so come up to my house this evening—you know where I live—and then I can tell you what Mrs. Keith says, for I am going to her now."

The grateful orphan looked her thanks, for her heart was too full to speak, and the attempt to do so occasioned a burst of tears that made the good-natured disciple of *Æsculapius* start up, as if he had just remembered that he was in a great hurry.

"Bless me!" he exclaimed, looking at his watch, "half-past ten, I declare. Good bye, child! You'll not forget to come this evening—suppose we say about seven o'clock."

And away he went, to bid other hearts rejoice by alleviating physical suffering, sympathizing with sorrow, and giving such aid as he could afford in cases of extreme poverty. A benevolent disposition, like the sun in his glorious path, sheds life and light wherever its warm rays fall, but never does it prove a greater blessing to mankind than

when it has its abode with the medical man of a poor district.

Mr. Thornton was, however, not quite easy in his mind as to having taken upon himself to answer for his wife's co-operation in his plans for the benefit of Miriam Bell, by supplying her with such apparel as might enable her to appear with credit before the highborn lady of Newland Hall. Not but what Mrs. Thornton was a good sort of woman in her way, but she was not in the habit of taking very enlarged views of things in general, and her principle of action had long been, and still continued to be, the consideration of her husband's small income and large family; an excellent inciting power unquestionably, but one that, nevertheless, may sometimes be overstrained. Charity may be exercised to very good purpose with very humble means, and without injury to those whose natural claims ought undoubtedly to be first considered. They who can live in comfort themselves, though they may be far from rich, and even

perhaps find it difficult to maintain their own position in the world, may surely at times spare a something they would scarcely miss that would help "to feed the hungry and to clothe the naked." More real good is sometimes done by small acts than great ones, acts that fall in the way of every one to perform, and are often neglected from a false notion that they are not of sufficient importance to merit attention. Mrs. Thornton, moreover, was subject to certain infirmities of temper not very uncommon among ladies who profess to be excellent managers, nor was she wholly free from the baleful influence of that monster whose eyes are of a verdant hue; consequently it required very nice management on the part of the doctor, to enlist her charitable feelings in the cause of his young and beautiful *protégée*. With considerable tact he avoided all mention of her personal endowments, and commenced his operations by describing her destitute condition, and utter inability to observe the decent custom of wearing mourning for her deceased parent.

This was a direct appeal to the good lady's most amiable prejudices, and she at once responded to it in the very manner the doctor had ventured to promise she would do, on which he gave her all the credit of being the originator of the kindly thought. "You certainly are one of the best creatures in the world, Kate. It will be a real charity; for Mrs. Keith has offered to take this young girl into her service, as a sort of school room nurse for some little folks who are expected at the Hall; but the poor thing could not go to see about the situation, because she had nothing fit to show herself in; so she will be doubly indebted to your goodness, as it will not only enable her to pay proper respect to her father's memory, but may likewise help her to the means of earning her living. I told her I would consult you on the subject, and desired her to come up here this evening. So, if you can do anything in the way of making her appear respectable, she might go to Mrs. Keith to-morrow; but it would

never do to send her there, looking like a beggar."

"Well, I'll do what I can," was the reply, "but God knows we can very ill afford to give anything away, and my old gowns, you see, cut up very well for Nancy, and ——"

"Yes, my dear, I know they do, which makes it the more generous and kind of you to think of sparing one of them for this purpose. It is a truly Christian act, for which I have no doubt she will be very grateful, and charity is sure to be rewarded sevenfold."

"Why, if I thought that," said the lady; but she did not finish her reflection, which was probably to the effect that charity was in that case an excellent investment. The doctor smiled, but made no remark upon the idea which he, perhaps, divined. "I am glad," he said, "that I told her to come to you this evening, for I think you will be pleased with her manners; she seems to me quite above the common run. But you

women are much better judges of these matters than we are, and I want to have your opinion as to whether I did right in recommending her for such a situation."

Gratified by her husband's praises, and flattered by his deference to her judgment, Mrs. Thornton was predisposed in favour of the object of his benevolence to the extent of looking out a not very shabby mourning dress with some crape upon it, that had been carefully brushed and laid by for future service, to which she added a shawl and bonnet to correspond, saying, as she placed them in readiness—

"God forbid that I should want them for these many years to come!"

And, being in a beneficent frame of mind, she received poor Miriam, who came at the time appointed, with much kindness, and bestowed her gift with a smiling face, not forgetting, however, to descant upon the useful purposes to which the articles might have been appropriated in her own family. Miriam was really very thankful, and, to

gratify her well meaning benefactress, she arrayed herself in the sable habiliments, which looked so well on her graceful form that the donor, who gave all the credit to the garments, though the chief part of it belonged, in fact, to the wearer, surveyed with pride her own good work, and invited Miriam to stay to tea, prompted by a desire to show the doctor that the praises he had lavished on her Christian virtues were not misplaced.

CHAPTER XIV.

Newland Hall, the splendid residence of General Keith, was an elegant building of very recent date, exhibiting, in its external fashion, something of the Italian, and something of the Oriental style. It was built by its present owner on his accession to the enormous wealth of a distant relative, which, added to his own ample fortune, yielded a princely income, and enabled him to gratify, to the utmost extent, a somewhat exuberant taste for expensive decorations. He had resided ten years at Calcutta, had

visited many parts of India, had been in Egypt and Syria, and on his return to Europe had spent full two years in Italy, so that he was well acquainted with many of the most splendid structures in all those countries, and in making his plan for Newland Hall had combined their distinctive characteristics with regard to architectural design, so as to produce a most agreeable effect, although it might present some incongruities to the eye of an artist.

The house, like all houses in the east, was flat roofed, and covered a large space of ground, as all the principal apartments were on the lower floor, there being only one storey above. A handsome marble colonnade, with a tessellated pavement, ran along the front and two sides of the edifice, from which glass doors opened into a spacious dining room on one side of the grand entrance, and a splendid *salon* on the other; the latter leading to a suite of magnificently furnished rooms, terminating in a conservatory, filled with the choicest exo-

tics. The grounds were highly ornamental. There were lawns, soft and smooth as velvet, adorned with statues and vases, copied from some of the finest specimens of Grecian art; fountains flowing into marble basins, and beds of the most brilliant and delicately perfumed flowers.

The broad gravel paths were as smooth and hard as polished oak; the light acacia, the graceful drooping ash, the tall elegant cedar, and other trees of picturesque beauty, were tastefully grouped in various parts; and everything was kept in such perfect order, that it would have been almost a relief to the eye to find a withered or a fallen leaf, a broken branch, or a blade of grass presumptuously shooting up in a wrong place.

Beyond the pleasure grounds there was an extensive orchard, a kitchen garden, hothouses (where grapes and pineapples flourished in abundance), and several glass houses always filled with choice plants, reared on purpose to supply the house and

table constantly with fresh flowers; but all this more useful part of the domain was shut out from view by a high wall, covered on the side that faced the garden with peaches and apricots, but on that which fronted the house, it was concealed by an avenue of trees, whose branches, meeting overhead, formed a cool and shady promenade, that was extremely pleasant in the heat of the day.

It was about noon, the air was balmy and full of sweets, the deep azure of the sky unsullied by a single cloud, and a gentle breeze now and then swept by, fraught with the delicious odours of the clematis, the scented myrtle, and the fragrant heliotrope, when Miriam, whose heart was fluttering with alternate hopes and fears, reached the gates of Newland Hall. They were standing open, and she was about to pass through, but hesitated as it flashed on her mind that it might be considered presumption so to do, as this was the carriage way as well as the path for distinguished visitors, and there

would most likely be some other mode of ingress for one coming in so humble a character as herself. Not far from the gate she observed one of the gardeners watering some plants, and was going to make the inquiry of him, when a matronly person, with a good-humoured countenance, appeared at the door of the lodge, and asked if she was looking for anybody ; on which she explained the object of her visit, and was directed to go round by the stables to a door at the back of the house, and inquire for Mrs. Bennet, the lady's maid.

"But I'll step along with you myself, miss," said the woman, "for you'll have to pass some of the grooms in the yard, and they'll be speaking to you, may be, for they're a saucy set."

Miriam gladly accepted the escort of this good-natured dame, who said to herself—

"Those fellows would be sure to have something to say to such a pretty young creature as this, especially that Tom Parks, for he has been a soldier."

So she led the way through the midst of the enemy, whose looks betokened that her caution was not superfluous, and passed through a scullery to the servants' hall, where, having given up her fair charge to the care of Mrs. Bennet, she returned to the lodge. Now Mrs. Bennet was one of those persons who are fond of arrogating to themselves a right of patronage, and this, she thought, was a fitting occasion for the exercise of that important prerogative. She was a starched, prim person, tall and angular, wearing a muslin dress, with many flounces, and a lace cap, adorned with pink ribbons and flowers. Her well practised eye detected, at a single glance, that the young girl's mourning was not new, although the death of her father was of such late occurrence, and her mental observations on that point were to the following effect—"Shabby as possible! that gown was never made for her; a cast-off of somebody's, I suppose; very poor, that's plain enough." And having come to this conclusion, she shaped her

behaviour accordingly, saying, with a mixture of affability and condescension—

“Oh, you are the young person, I believe, that Mr. Thornton was speaking about for Lady Wilsden’s situation?”

“I did not know the name of the lady,” replied Miriam. “It is Mrs. Keith I wish to see.”

“Rather high!” thought Mrs. Bennet, glancing again at the half worn habiliments. Then, with a still more consequential air, she replied, “Oh, very well—you can see Mrs. Keith, or you can speak to me; it will be all the same.”

“I should prefer seeing your lady,” said Miriam, very quietly, to the flounced Abigail, who walked on with disdainful step, through a long corridor which led to the entrance hall, where, as in every other part of the house, the wealth of the owner was conspicuous. The two principal windows were adorned with finely executed paintings, representing historical subjects, the one being Elizabeth bestowing the honour of

knighthood on Raleigh ; the other, the coronation of Queen Victoria ; and these superb works of art threw a rich but softened colouring on a beautiful mosaic floor of elaborate design. The ceiling displayed the signs of the zodiac in a large circle, and other celestial figures, in which the touch of a master hand was discoverable, and on each side of the hall stood three bronze statues, on pedestals of black marble, holding silver lamps, which, at night, were always lighted. But this gorgeous display made very little impression upon Miriam, whose mind was occupied with far different thoughts, and whose anxiety, as to the result of her application, seemed to increase with every step, as she followed her conductress up the grand staircase, which was of ample width to admit of being embellished by fragrant shrubs and flowers of every brilliant hue, surpassing in their natural loveliness the more costly decorations of this splendid domicile as the lilies of the field eclipsed all the vain glories of King Solomon.

About half way up this ascent they met a gentleman coming down, who made way for Miriam, and, as she passed, touched his hat with a polite gesture, which salutation she gracefully acknowledged, at the same time blushing deeply at the notice she could not help seeing she excited, for his eyes were so intently fixed upon her that he did not observe the very low curtsey made by her companion, who was extremely wroth and indignant thereat, mentally condemning the bad taste that paid more homage to shabby black than to muslin flounces and pink ribbons.

It was General Keith. He was a fine, noble looking old man, very tall, erect, and soldier-like in his bearing. His hair was almost white; his bright grey eyes, quick and penetrating; his features, handsome; and the expression of his countenance, though it bore tokens of a stern and proud nature, was not unpleasing. There was something in his appearance, too, that reminded Miriam of her father in his earlier

years, when she, in her childish adoration, used to look up to him as a god-like being; it was a something she was at a loss to define, for it consisted not in any likeness of form or features; still some chord of remembrance was touched that thrilled softly and sweetly through her heart, inclining it towards the distinguished personage who had unconsciously awakened such pleasurable emotions. In that mysterious resemblance, which was felt rather than seen, it seemed as if the spirit of the departed was hovering near, to watch over, and guard her from all ill, making its presence visible in the person of him whose roof was to afford her shelter and protection; and this soothing idea inspired her with more courage for the approaching interview that would decide her fate, at least for the present. How much her fate really depended on it, she little guessed at that time.

At the top of the staircase there was a carpeted gallery, with a light balustrade overlooking the hall, out of which ran

several long passages having doors on each side, and one of these was rather abruptly opened by Miriam's guide, who chose the following mode of introduction as befitting the occasion—

“This is the young person, mem.”

The lady to whom this polite announcement was addressed looked up from the fancy work, on which she was engaged, and said in a languid tone—

“Oh, very well, Bennet—put a chair here, close by me, that I may not have to speak loud. Come and sit down, Miss Bell. You can go, Bennet; I will ring when I want you.”

These commands were obeyed ungraciously enough, and Mrs. Bennet swept her flounces out of the room in a towering state of indignation. “Things had come to a pretty pass indeed, ordered to set a chair for a person like that! what next, she wondered. But, if the upstart creature came to live there, she should soon be made to know her place.” These, and other sen-

timents to the same effect were boiling in the bosom of the angry spinster, when she again encountered the General in the hall, and was about to pass him with silent contempt, omitting to render the customary sign of homage in revenge for the slight so lately put upon herself by that august personage; but she was fated to endure a still greater mortification, for he stopped her with the following question, which was by no means calculated to sooth her irritated feelings.

"Pray who was that young lady you were shewing up stairs just now, Mrs. Bennet?"

"Young lady, sir?" she repeated in an affected tone of astonishment—"I don't know of any young lady.

"I mean the person I saw with you not five minutes ago."

"Oh! That young woman who was going up to my lady, sir? I did not suppose you meant her—It was a person about the nurse maid's place, for Lady Wilsden."

"Nursemaid! I understood it was a

nursery governess that Lady Wilsden required?"

"They call it a governess, I believe," replied Bennet contemptuously, "but it is just the same thing."

"No, it is not the same thing;" said the general with one of his stern looks "and let it be understood that, if this young lady should come to reside here, I shall expect everybody in my house to observe the distinction."

And he walked away, leaving the astonished soubrette to digest the order as she might, for he did not often issue commands respecting the domestic arrangements of the establishment; but, when he did, they were peremptory, and no one dared to neglect or disobey them.

The room into which Miriam had been so contumeliously introduced was an elegant boudoir fitted up with exquisite taste and furnished most luxuriously. The walls were painted in panels with scenes illustrative of the Moorish Empire in Spain, and were

executed with the gorgeous splendour that distinguished that most interesting race of people, of whose magnificence so many traces are still to be found. Each compartment was adorned with a rich border of purple and gold and the spaces between were filled up with looking glasses from the ceiling to the floor, the latter being covered with a Persian carpet of the most costly description. The curtains were of pale green damask satin, fringed with gold, and the chairs, the sofas, the ottomans were all covered with the same beautiful material. Bouquets of choice flowers were placed in china vases on ornamental stands, in several parts of the room, and the tables displayed a variety of lady like implements of industry in the shape of work baskets stored with wools and silks, and numerous pretty knick knacks, for trifling away time in that useless kind of occupation generally styled fancy work.

Miriam had, at the first glance, felt some doubt as to the identity of the lady in whose presence she found herself, thinking

she looked much too young to be the wife of a man, who, to judge from his appearance, must be on the verge of seventy ; but so it was.

The lady, who was apparently not more than three or four and thirty, was the wife of General Keith, to whom she was married in India, with her own free will when quite a girl, he being then an exceedingly handsome agreeable man some few years over fifty, but possessing many personal advantages that made him appear much younger ; and although, with her pretty face and childish manner, she might even now have rivalled many a youthful beauty, she was still content to be the petted idol of the gallant veteran, whose indulgence had rather spoiled her perhaps so far as making her a little fanciful ; but as that was her worst fault, it might well be pardoned. She was not remarkable for intellectual endowments, nor for any very striking traits of character ; but she was both pretty and good natured, two excellent qualities which, when aided

by the gifts of fortune, help a woman through the world with great satisfaction to herself as well as to all around her.

She spoke very kindly to Miriam, and alluded with much feeling to her late bereavement.

"I can feel for you, Miss Bell,"—she said, "for I lost my father when I was about your age just before I was married, and it was the greatest sorrow I ever experienced. Mr. Thornton has told me what a good daughter you have been, and I assure you that both the General and myself are interested about you ; so I hope you will suit Lady Wilsden, but I have no doubt about it, for the children are young and Mr. Thornton tells me you can instruct them in music and French. He said something about German too I think, do you know much of that language ?

"Yes madam ; my mother was a native of Germany and spoke English very imperfectly, so that, as a child I was accustomed to speak in German ; and as my father

understood the language quite well, I have never lost it."

"I am glad of that for it will be a great recommendation, I know you will like the children—they are two nice little girls. It sometimes makes me quite unhappy to think I have no children of my own; I should be so fond of them. But, as the General says, nobody can expect to have everything they wish for."

"And you, madam," said Miriam, who was beginning to feel quite at her ease with this affable, simple-minded woman, "surely you, who have so much to make you happy ought not to allow this one deficiency to render you otherwise."

"You have taken a lesson out of Mr. Thornton's book said the lady, laughing—"That is just what he says and I believe you are both right. When should you be able to come, Miss Bell?"

Miriam replied that she had so few preparations to make, that one hour would suffice for all she had to do.

“Then you may as well come to morrow,” said Mrs. Keith. “I expect my visitors to arrive this evening. The whole family are coming I believe, Lord and Lady Wilsden, the four children with their two nurses, and Lady Wilsden’s mother, Mrs. Ballantine. She is a widow, and a very charming person indeed. Will you come to morrow?”

Miriam readily assented, and this most material point being settled, rose to depart, when Mrs. Keith, with considerate kindness, said she must not go till she had taken some refreshment, and ringing a small bell that stood on the table, desired Mrs. Bennet, who answered the summons, to show Miss Bell into the breakfast room, and desire the housekeeper to send in the luncheon.

CHAPTER XV.

The widow of Sir Lyttleton Cray was now far advanced in years, but she still remained the same masculine, selfish, unfeeling woman she had ever been. Time had brought more wrinkles to her brow, more cares to her heart, but had not softened the asperity of her temper, nor woven around her that sacred web of domestic affection that gives new life and warmth to old age, lightens the burden of its infirmities, and sustains its failing steps, in their descending passage, through the darkening vale of years

that leads to eternity. Her favourite son Robert, the younger of the two, like the generality of those who have been spoiled in childhood, repaid her unwise indulgence with shameless ingratitude. In his childhood he had been what is usually termed a remarkably fine boy, that is, he was large for his age, with bold handsome features, dark curly hair and a bright complexion, and as Lady Cray was proud of his personal beauty, she chose to make an idol of him, and supplied him extravagantly with pocket money from her own purse, while Milburn, the elder son, had little beyond a very small allowance from his father, and this was a source of discontent that manifested itself in frequent acts of defiance. In fact he made no pretence either of affection or respect for his mother but even treated her, at times, with open insult and undisguised contempt, pretending to justify his unfilial conduct, by reproaching her continually with what he called her unnatural partiality for his brother.

Both grew up thoroughly unprincipled,

but essentially different in character, the elder being as parsimonious as the younger was extravagant, and each having all the vices that usually grow out of those several propensities. The dissatisfaction of Milburn with regard to the unequal distribution of Lady Cray's maternal affections had now another cause—she had, three times within the last two years, paid debts to a large amount for her son Robert that his father had positively refused to pay, a use of her money that her first-born did not at all approve of, devoutly believing that as regarded the wealth of either parent, it was his right to have the lion's share. The reckless spendthrift had obtained these favours from his mother by promises of reform, which he had not the slightest intention to keep; for he was not very scrupulous as to the means of getting money, so long as he did get it, to throw away in gambling, and other pursuits no less discreditable. He knew that, by his father's will, made at the time his brother came of age,

his portion was such as would enable him to live like a gentleman; but he did not know that Sir Lyttleton had made another will about a year before his death, in consequence of having then been threatened with apoplexy, nor was Lady Gray aware of that circumstance, which had been carefully concealed from the knowledge of every one except Mr. Bolton, the solicitor, who was still flourishing like an evergreen at Preston, not much changed from what he was thirty years before.

On the day of Sir Lyttleton's funeral, Alfred Ballantine, who, as the nearest relative next to his own immediate family, had been invited to attend, arrived at Culverley early in the morning, and followed the remains of the baronet as one of the chief mourners, a duty from which he would willingly have been exempt, as he and his cousins were never on very cordial terms with each other. However, it was quite out of the question to

decline such a requisition, so he submitted to it with the best grace he could.

The party assembled at Culverley Rise on the occasion of the solemn ceremonial, consisted of the two sons of the deceased; Mr. Bolton, the solicitor, whose presence was required to read the will; two gentlemen who resided in the neighbourhood, and had been on terms of intimacy with the late baronet; the physician that had attended him; two or three of the principal tenants on the estate; and Mr. Ballantine himself.

It was disgusting to the ingenuous mind of the latter to witness the hypocritical tone of sadness assumed by the brothers, whose exhibition of gross neglect and utter heartlessness during their father's illness was so notorious, that he had heard it spoken of with the censure it deserved by some farmers, who did not know who he was, in the public room of an inn where he had stopped to breakfast; and he found some difficulty in refraining from telling the young men what he thought of their conduct. However, he considered it would be unseemly to provoke

discussion at such a time, therefore made up his mind to suppress his thoughts, and to stay no longer than was absolutely necessary for the duty he was called upon to perform.

The place of interment was some miles distant from Culverley, being the family vault of the Milburns, where Lord Milburn, Lady Elizabeth, and Sir Reginald Cray were all buried; therefore Alfred determined to plead a necessity for returning to London that same day, as an excuse for not going back to the Rise.

A great number of gentlemen's carriages had been sent to join the funeral train at a large town through which it had to pass, not so much from any sentiment of respect for the dead, as from a punctilious observance of etiquette; and this again was a mockery that jarred on the sensitive feelings of young Ballantine, who abhorred pretence of every kind, but more especially that which appeared to him as turning the solemn rites of the church into a theatrical spectacle.

"I wish with all my heart, I had nothing to do with it"—he said to himself, folding his arms with an impatient gesture, as he looked from the coach window on the gazing multitude in the street. It was at this moment the coffin of poor Reginald was borne past, and the star of his future destiny shone upon him for one instant, with a light that was never extinguished.

The people of the inn, where the procession halted on its return, to be dismantled and dispersed, and where Mr. Ballantine stayed to dine, concluding, from the part he had taken in the late ceremonial, that he was somebody of consequence, took care to supply him with an excellent dinner, and the best wine the house afforded, and while he sat enjoying the latter, together with the luxury of what he termed a splendid cigar, he amused himself with making fruitless attempts to delineate, with a bad pencil, on the backs of his cards, the beautiful face of the lonely mourner he had seen that day performing a task similar to his own, but oh!

under what different circumstances, and with what different feelings. At length he gave up the essay at a likeness in despair, and set about moralizing on the unequal gifts of fortune, and thinking he would rather be a poor man thus lamented, than a rich one followed to the grave by cold hearts and tearless eyes. With such reflections as these he whiled away the time till within ten minutes of the hour at which the train started for London, when he betook himself to the railway station, and, in conversation with his fellow travellers, forgot for the time being the occurrences of the day.

"You are home soon, Alfred," said Mrs. Ballantine. "I did not expect you till to-morrow. I hope you have had no disagreement with those young men on such an occasion as this."

"No, mother—I have not, thank Heaven! But if I had not come away as I did, I rather think there would have been a bit of a skirmish. They certainly are a couple of the veriest hypocrites I ever came across in

CHAPTER XVI.

In the meantime the brothers, Milburn and Robert Cray, with Mr. Bolton and the two gentlemen who in consequence of their near neighbourhood had been invited, and for the same reason had felt obliged to assist at the obsequies of the deceased as a point of etiquette, returned together to the house, where a plentiful repast was prepared, to which they all sat down with very solemn faces, but tolerably good appetites as it appeared, for many a delicate dish was speedily emptied, and if the wine was

quaffed in silence it certainly was not spared.

A grim smile might now and then have been observed flickering on the lawyer's lips; but whenever this happened he had instant recourse to his glass, so that it was unnoticed; and at length he ventured to suggest, in a subdued tone and with due gravity of manner, the propriety of proceeding to business of another nature, saying, with the obsequious air of one who knows he is addressing his patron—

"With your leave, Sir Milburn, we will get this painful affair over as soon as possible. These gentlemen will not object to remain while the will is read, I suppose?"

This supposition was put in the form of a query, and, as no objection was raised, the whole party adjourned to the library, where, in a few minutes, Lady Cray, clad in the deepest sables, made her appearance, leaning on the arm of her maid. Every one rose at her entrance, and stood profoundly silent till she had taken her seat, when they

resumed their's; and then the lawyer drew from the breast pocket of his coat a thick, heavy packet, of which he broke the seals, one by one, very deliberately, unfolded an enormous skin of parchment, and, having coughed once or twice to clear his voice, commenced reading the preamble in a dry, business-like manner, and in slow time, being in no hurry to come to the main provisions of the settlement, which he very well knew would create some surprise, and that was probably the reason why he was desirous there should be others present besides the parties interested, as he could not foresee what effect might be produced, a habit of caution his experience had taught him, and which in this case appeared to be not altogether unnecessary, for he had not proceeded very far when the lady half rising from her chair started forward and held up her hand as if commanding him to stop, exclaiming in an excited tone—

“It is false!—that is not my husband's will!”

"I am of opinion you will find that it is, madam," said the lawyer, with a bland smile. "I believe, gentlemen"—and he pointed out the signature to the visitors—"I believe, gentlemen, you are both acquainted with the handwriting of my late much respected and lamented client—you will recognise it here, I think?"

The two gentlemen thus directly appealed to examined the signature, and both agreed that it was unquestionably the handwriting of Sir Lyttleton Cray, on which the man of business turned, with an air of satisfaction, to the elder brother, and asked if he should go on.

"Of course," was the reply; "I don't know what right anybody has to interrupt you."

And as he spoke the young man darted an angry glance at his mother, who answered to the look and the observation, whilst her whole frame trembled with violent passion.

"You forget who I am, sir. I have a

right to speak; and I protest against that deed as an infamous forgery, for Sir Lytleton made his will in my presence, and that man knows it."

"I am quite aware," replied Mr. Bolton, that your ladyship was present on one occasion—if I remember right it was about five years ago—when my late lamented client made a settlement of his property. I drew up the deed myself, and it was witnessed by Alexander Rose, who holds the Wigley Farm, and my clerk, John Gribble; it will probably be found amongst his papers."

"Here it is," said Sir Milburn, tossing over a folded paper to the solicitor, who opened it, and, glancing at the date, said—

"Ah! yes; I thought that was about the time: just five years and two months since. It was perfectly regular, and, at the time, expressed the will of the testator; but this document which I have in my hand, signed also by my clerk, John Gribble, and Samuel Walker, a medical gentleman at Preston. Sir Lytleton was consulting him, I re-

member, about a complaint in his chest, is dated only twelve months back, consequently the former deed is cancelled."

Regardless of the presence of the strangers, regardless of the decorum due to the solemnities of the day, her features distorted with passion, her whole frame trembling with the violence of her emotions, Lady Cray started to her feet, loudly declaring it was a conspiracy to rob her of her rights, and that she would have justice. The two friends, who began to feel themselves in an awkward position, looked uneasily at each other, and one of them, rising, said--

"As this appears to be entirely a family affair, it would be better, perhaps, that we should withdraw."

"Not at all," replied Sir Milburn; "as you have heard the beginning, you may as well hear the end. Go on, Bolton."

All this time Robert Cray had not uttered a single word. There had been no mention made yet of him, and he hoped to find that he stood the same in this as in the former

anticipation during her late temporary seclusion. Instead of finding herself the sole mistress of the mansion over which she had so long ruled with a despotic though nominally divided sway, she was to remain there only by the sufferance of her eldest son, and, in the event of changing her abode, to receive from him as an equivalent two hundred pounds a year, in addition to an allowance of three hundred, which was all that her late husband had thought proper to settle upon her. Five hundred a year to a woman who had been accustomed to an expenditure of, at least, fifteen thousand, was a terrible falling off indeed; for, even with what was left of her former jointure, it would barely suffice to maintain her in any degree of respectability, according to her acceptation of the term, for poverty and affluence have no positive standard, and one man may feast in plenty on the crumbs that fall in waste from another man's table.

At the command of his new patron, the lawyer proceeded with the reading of the

will, but soon met with another and more formidable interruption from Robert Cray, who, with the exception of a bequest of one thousand pounds, was left dependent on the bounty (so the document was worded) of his mother, with a recommendation that she should make use of the influence possessed by some members of her family, to procure him a commission in the army, or an appointment abroad.

The fury of the young man at this most unlooked for crisis in his fate was something awful—terrific. He clenched his hands, glared fiercely for a moment around him, then made a sudden spring, like a tiger, upon the affrighted solicitor, endeavouring to wrest the parchment from his hand, and he would probably have inflicted some serious injury upon the person of the old man, had he not been withheld by the strangers, whose united strength was scarcely sufficient to prevent him from making a violent assault upon his brother, who sat, like an unconcerned spectator, looking very much as if he was about to whistle a tune.

"Stand back, Robert! Stand back, I command you!" said Lady Cray, in a loud, authoritative tone, for she began to perceive the necessity of putting some constraint upon herself, and, if possible, upon him also, as Milburn was now absolute lord of the domain, and possessed the power of expelling them both at his pleasure.

"I will not stand back!" cried the infuriated youth, struggling to free himself from the grasp of those who held him. "Let me go!—I will crush the viper to the earth! This is all his work—he has robbed me, and I will have his heart's blood! Let me go, I say!"

"Good God! are you mad?" exclaimed one of the gentlemen. "Pray keep yourself quiet. What good will all this passion do you?"

"Oh, never mind; let him alone," said Milburn. "If he lays his hand upon me, I will soon have him turned out of *my* house. I am master here now, and those that wish to stay had better behave themselves, I can tell them."

As he said this he looked furtively at his mother, who was stung to the very soul by his words, for she felt all the force of the menace they conveyed, and it was a blow to her pride she knew not how to endure. Yes, he was, indeed, master—wholly, absolutely, and she knew he would glory in making her feel the full extent of his authority by holding up the threat of expulsion perpetually before her eyes. For Robert she had even worse fears, and they were more speedily realized than she could have anticipated.

The remonstrances of the strangers seemed to have produced some effect upon him, so far as making him for the moment at least a little more reasonable; for, although sullen, he was quiet, and having ceased to struggle with his captors, they fancied he was in a calmer mood, and let go their hold; but no sooner did he feel himself at liberty than he sprang forward, and, ere any one could be aware of his purpose, aimed a furious blow at his brother, which felled him to the

ground, then rushed out of the room, and, in another instant, the loud clang made by the closing of the hall door told that he had quitted the house.

His mother shrieked and wildly entreated that somebody would follow and bring him back.

"My poor, unhappy boy! He will lay violent hands upon himself. Will nobody go after, and save him!"

"You need not alarm yourself, madam," said the lawyer. "There is no danger of that sort, depend upon it. If he lays violent hands upon anybody, it will not be upon himself, I'll venture to say."

Milburn rose slowly, his face as colourless as if every drop of his lifeblood had, indeed, been taken from him, and, with a terrible oath, he declared that the assailant should never sleep under his roof again. The two strangers being now thoroughly disgusted, took their leave with very little ceremony; they had received a lesson on the inexpediency of mixing themselves up in

family affairs, they did not easily forget, and as all the purposes were answered for which they had been requested to stay, no one attempted to detain them.

The apartment where this disgraceful scene took place was on the ground floor, and there was a smaller room on the opposite side of the hall, which has been noticed in a former part of this narrative as having been the studio of Miriam's father in those bright days when he and care were strangers. To this room Lady Cray, who, from terror and excitement, was really in a pitiable state, now retired in order to compose her agitated spirits; but she could hardly have chosen a more unpropitious place of refuge, for it was there, as may be remembered, that the memorable interview took place between her and her husband's much wronged brother on his last visit to Culverley Rise; and although so many years had elapsed since that event, and she had long banished the recollection of it from her mind, it came back now as fresh and vivid

as if it had happened only yesterday. The hour of retribution had at length arrived, the hour predicted by Reginald Cray as he stood there proudly, yet with saddened brow, a doomed exile, the victim of a brother's perfidy and a father's injustice.

She could feel the bitterness of these things now—now that they had fallen upon her own favourite child—now that she might herself be soon driven forth from the home she had so long looked upon as her own.

In this very room she had cruelly insulted Reginald in his sorrow, and triumphed in his banishment; she had pitilessly beheld him gazing for the last time on his lost Eden, the home of his youth, and his form rose up before her now like an avenging spirit, and his voice sounded again in her ears with that solemn warning he had then spoken—

“There may yet come a time when the remembrance of this hour will be as bitter to you as its endurance is now to me.”

That time had come at last—the prophecy

was fully accomplished; and, by a strange fatality, the judgment had overtaken her on the very day when he, who had thus prophesied, was consigned to the tomb.

How truly in this was fulfilled the saying of Him, whose words were all truth—"With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again!"

CHAPTER XVII.

Three weeks had elapsed since the events recorded in the last chapter, and Miriam had become sufficiently domesticated at Newland Hall to have lost the feeling of being a stranger. It was a splendid dwelling place, and she was surrounded with luxuries she had never known before ; yet there was an aching void in her heart, a longing desire for companionship—for the sympathy and affection she had been accustomed to from her childhood—for that sweet communion of thought and feeling that gives interest to

every trifling occurrence, and lustre to the humblest home. In feeling thus she accused herself of ingratitude to her benefactors, for there was no lack of kindness on their part; her comfort was cared for, and amusement was furnished for her leisure hours that she could enjoy in solitude. There was a piano in the room dedicated to her use, she was amply supplied with materials for drawing and fancy works, and was at liberty to take away any books she chose from the General's well stored library. These were pleasant resources, and she fully estimated the value of them; but there was still the one great want that nothing can supply—she felt alone. Had it rested with General Keith, she would have been treated as a guest in his house, but Lady Wilsden was one of those persons who hold it essential to the preservation of order in society, that barriers impassable should be set up, and strictly maintained, between its different grades; therefore, with much goodness of heart, she was enveloped in an atmosphere of pride

and reserve, scarcely discerned by those standing on a level with herself, but impenetrable as a wall of stone to all beneath her. She invariably spoke to the young governess with kindness, as far as words went; hoped she had everything she wished for, expressed, in amiable terms, abundance of satisfaction at her attention to the children, and all that sort of thing, very lady-like, polite, and considerate, but with an air of condescension which seemed to say—"I am the superior, you are the dependent. There can be nothing in common between us."

Miriam felt all this, and it was a relief to her mind when the lady's daily visit to the children had been made; yet there was nothing to complain of, and, while chilled by the manner, she could not help admiring the brilliant beauty and conscious dignity of the woman of fashion, whose stately demeanour might have graced a queen, and often she said to herself—

"Why should I feel thus? Fortune has

placed her in a higher sphere—she has a right to hold herself above me, and I have none to think it should be otherwise.”

Mrs. Keith once said to her husband—“Poor Miss Bell must feel very lonely of an evening. I should like to ask her to come down into the drawing-room sometimes. Would it be any harm do you think?” To which he replied—“I wish, with all my heart, you could do so, my darling. But I am afraid we must not think of it. She is decidedly an appendage to Lady Wilsden, and it is her ladyship’s right to dispose of her as she thinks fit. We cannot interfere, for if you were to make a companion of Miss Bell, it might be considered by your guests as a tacit reproof to them for not doing so!”

Mrs. Keith owned the truth of this argument, and so the matter dropped.

Mrs. Ballantine was much more accessible than her daughter; but Miriam saw very little of her, and when they did meet, there was the same bar of inequality that is ever a check to the freedom of social inter-

course. It is the ungenial frost that keeps the blossoms of thought and feeling imprisoned within their shrine.

Still, there were many pleasures to be found in this new life, and one of the greatest that Miriam enjoyed was, to perceive a warm and increasing affection towards herself, on the part of her young pupils, two charming little girls, the one about six, the other five years of age. There was another source of happiness, too, in the uniform kindness of General Keith, and that imaginary resemblance to her father, which still encircled him like a bright halo, giving an indescribable interest to every word and look he bestowed upon her. In her walks with the children, about the grounds, she frequently met with him; and, although the interview seldom lasted more than a few minutes, there was always something pleasant to remember that brightened the rest of the day. One morning he said—

“You seem to be an admirer of choice flowers, Miss Bell; I have just desired

Waller to make you up a bouquet; you should always have fresh flowers in your rooms, and, if it will afford you any gratification, I will give orders to that effect."

She turned her sparkling eyes to his with a look of such real, heartfelt gratitude, that he took her hand with a most benevolent smile, saying—

"I am glad I have thought of this—it shall not be neglected."

And he walked away, to join Lord Wilsden, who was sauntering on the lawn in front of the house. This young nobleman was rather haughty, and extremely proud, but very gentlemanly withal in his manners, nice in his dress, a strict observer of all points of etiquette; in short, he was attentive to proprieties of every kind, but there was not much in him; he was no Solomon. But then he was Lord Wilsden; he had a large estate, and a good rent roll; was fashionable, and well looking; and, on the whole, was an estimable person, being more correct, probably, in his sayings and doings than the

generality of men who are gifted with higher talents.

The little incident relating to the flowers made a vivid impression on the orphan's heart. If the General had made her a costly present it would have excited her gratitude, and demanded her thanks. But a costly present from a rich person to a poor one, has always the air of an act of beneficence, which seems to carry with it an assertion of superiority, on the part of the donor. At least it can scarcely fail to be thus felt by the recipient. But in the gift of General Keith, no such assertion of superiority appeared. It was a delicate attention tending to shew that she held the same place in his estimation as the other ladies of the family, for whom flowers were gathered daily; and when the beautiful bouquet was brought in and placed on her table, she shed tears over it,—gentle tears, like summer rain-drops, that give freshness and beauty to the things of the earth, and leave the sky brighter than it was before.

It happened on the following day, that the General and Mrs. Keith being out riding with their guests, Miriam went, with the children, into the promenade by the orchard wall, where she seated herself, with a book in her hand, on one of the rustic seats under the trees, whilst the little girls were running up and down, amusing themselves with their hoops and balls; when, suddenly she was startled by a loud, joyous cry of—"Here's Uncle Alf! here's Uncle Alf!" and then her ear caught the tones of a rich, deep, manly voice, answering to the exclamation—

"Hallo, little sprites! What—have they all gone out, and left you by yourselves, to get into all manner of mischief, hey?"

"No," said one, "we are not by ourselves; Miss Bell is with us, so we can't get into any mischief."

"Miss Bell—who's Miss Bell?"

"Why, don't you know? she's our governess."

"Your governess, is she? then why don't she keep you in better order?"

"So she does," said the other little one; "and we like her very much; come and see her, Uncle Alf, won't you?"

"Oh, very well, where is she to be seen?"

"There, under one of those trees, reading a book. I know you will like her, she is so goodnatured."

"Well, come along then; you must introduce me, Mary—and now can you tell me where mamma and grandmamma are gone, and what time they will be home again?"

Miriam had heard every word of this colloquy, but the speakers had been hidden from her sight until this moment, when they appeared through the trees at the distance of only a few paces from where she sat.

"Here's Uncle Alf; Miss Bell," said little Mary, trying to drag him forward, but the young man was riveted to the spot, for she had turned her blushing face towards him, and it was the same beautiful face that had been haunting his imagination for three weeks past, the face of her he had so lately

seen in the garb of poverty and wretchedness, following a parish pauper to his burial. How could he reconcile such incongruities? Yes, he could not be mistaken, and, incomprehensible as the fact might be, there was not the shadow of a doubt on his mind, that this was, indeed, the lovely mourner he had seen, and whose features were indelibly engraven on his memory, notwithstanding his ineffectual endeavours to pourtray them. Miriam, all unconscious of these reminiscences, and not knowing how to account for the evident surprise he manifested, cast her eyes down again on her book with signs of confusion that had an instantaneous effect in restoring his selfpossession. He approached her with a respectful air, taking off his hat and thus displaying a forest of rich dark curls, that set off to great advantage a fine intellectual countenance, and said, with a mixture of gentlemanly ease, and natural gaiety—

“Your little pupils have lured me here, Miss Bell, by the promise of an introduction;

but as you will scarcely understand who Uncle Alfy is, I shall be under the necessity of introducing myself. I am Alfred Ballantine, the brother of Lady Wilsden; and I shall hope to claim the privilege, in time, of adding, the friend of Miss Bell."

"I was quite aware," replied Miriam, "that Uncle Alfy was Mr. Ballantine, for I am no stranger to your name, I assure you. But I think, sir, you could not have been expected this morning, for if you had been, General Keith would certainly have remained at home to receive you."

"They did not expect me till to-morrow," said Alfred, who was secretly delighted at the happy chance that afforded him a pleasure so little anticipated. "I suppose they will not be out long; so, with your permission, I shall make these little ones entertain me till their return."

"I am quite sure they will be very happy to do that," replied Miriam; and, thinking he really meant what he said, she once more had recourse to her book; but nothing was

farther from the intention of Mr. Ballantine than to make so unprofitable a use of the golden opportunity fate had thrown in his way. However, to keep up appearances, he made a pretence of playing at hide and seek with the children for a little while, then taking a seat by the side of Miriam, he told them he would give sixpence to whichever should first catch the ball fifty times in succession, throwing it to the height of a certain tree he pointed out, calculating that this would give them employment for half an hour at least. The little girls eagerly commenced their task, and, as Miriam still continued to read, Alfred did not immediately interrupt her; but, after a short interval of silence, he said—

“May I be permitted to ask what is the subject of your studies?”

She gave the book into his hand, and he saw, with some surprise, that it was one of Miss Bremer's tales, in German, and his thoughts again reverted to the circumstances of abject poverty under which he had so

recently beheld her. What magic could have wrought so complete, so extraordinary a change? She was well, and even fashionably, dressed; her employment was in itself a proof of an education that must have been attended with care and cost, whilst the ease of her manner contrasted so forcibly with the wild despair, the utter misery he had seen depicted on her countenance as she passed him on that never to be forgotten morning, that he still doubted whether he was not under some strange delusion.

“Is it possible that I can be deceived?” he said to himself. “No, it certainly is the same face—yet that wretched burial. I cannot comprehend it.”

He longed to ask some question that might lead to a solution of the mystery, but could think of nothing but what would be too direct. At length he said—

“You read German. Have you lived in Germany?”

“No; I have always lived in England.”

“In London, perhaps?”

"I never was in London in my life ; never twenty miles from this spot."

"Indeed ! I should hardly have thought—but, pardon me, I am perhaps speaking with too much freedom upon so slight an acquaintance ; I ought not, indeed, to have intruded upon you so unceremoniously, but I was born, Miss Bell, in a warmer climate than this, and cannot always conform to the customs and restraints of English society. Will you forgive me ?"

"I am so little acquainted with the rules of society," said Miriam, "that I did not know you were infringing them."

"In that case it is clearly my duty to take especial care not to infringe them, and so far, I hope you will trust me."

She looked as if she felt he might be trusted, and he continued—

"I came down sooner than I was expected, because I heard that my mother and sister were going in a few days to Culverley Rise.

Miriam started, the sound seemed familiar

to her ear, yet she did not, at the moment, remember when or where she had heard it."

"Culverley Rise!" she repeated.

"Yes; do you know it? Were you ever there?"

"No; I do not even know where it is, yet the name does not appear strange to me. Culverley Rise! surely I have heard something about it—I cannot recollect!"

She seemed to be speaking to herself rather than to him, and trying to recal some forgotten circumstance.

"It was Sir Lyttleton Cray's place," said Alfred; "and is in this county, not many miles from Preston."

Miriam remembered now; the name of Sir Lyttleton Cray brought it all back to her mind, which was agitated in no slight degree by the extraordinary intelligence just communicated.

Her emotion was so apparent that the young man was about to ask the cause, when he was prevented by the children, who came, running, with laughing faces, to demand the promised sixpence.

"Well, who's the winner?" he said, taking out his purse.

"I am," cried the little Elinor, the younger of the two; "I've caught my ball fifty times, and it went up as high as the tree every time."

"Quite sure it went up as high, are you?"

"Oh, yes; and Mary knows it did, too; don't you, Mary?"

"Yes, it went quite as high, and so did mine; but mine fell just as I got to forty-two."

"Well, then, I suppose I must give Elinor the prize; and now you may have another try, if you like; but mind that it is all fair."

Away they went, with all the light-hearted joyousness of happy childhood, in the full belief that the mind of Alfred Ballantine was at that moment wholly intent on the result of their trial of skill. As soon as they were gone he turned again to Miriam, whose ideas were evidently in

a state of confusion. Her self-possession seemed entirely to have deserted her, she was pale and red by turns, her voice trembled, and she gave incoherent answers to one or two questions he asked. She was, in fact, communing with herself, and if she heard the words he spoke, their meaning did not reach her, so completely was she engrossed by the recollections his unexpected communication had brought back. The paragraph in the newspaper wherein the mention of Sir Lyttleton Cray and Culverley Rise had appeared to excite her father's interest to such a painful, and to her, unaccountable degree; his manifest anxiety to conceal from her that he was interested in it; the mystery that hung over his early life; and the accidental circumstances that had thrown her amongst people so closely connected with the man whose name had affected him so powerfully; all these thoughts passed in rapid succession through her mind, connecting themselves with the observations made by Mr. Thornton on seeing her father's portrait.

There was, indeed, in all this much subject for reflection and also for expectation, if, as was not unlikely, she should be included in the party that was going to Culverley Rise. Impressed with this idea, and not a little excited by it, she asked, in a tone and manner that showed how deeply she felt interested in the answer, whether Lady Wilsden meant to take the children with her; to which Mr. Ballantine replied that he believed she did.

"And in that case," he said, "you will of course go too. Sir Lyttleton is lately dead, and the estate now belongs to his eldest son; they are relations of ours, therefore my mother and sister think it necessary to pay a *visit of condolence*, I believe you call it, to his widow. I do not much like any of them, but, as we are related, I feel bound to be civil to a certain extent."

"Have you any particular reason for your dislike to them?" Miriam asked with a look of anxious curiosity that did not escape the observation of him to whom the question was addressed.

"There must be something in all this," he thought. "I will know the meaning of it, if possible." Then, in reply to the inquiry, he said—"Nothing very particular; I mean, there is no one decided cause. But you surely know some of the family—the sons, perhaps? There are two of them: Milburn, who is now Sir Milburn Cray, and Robert."

He looked very hard at her as he spoke, in order to detect any signs of embarrassment, but none such appeared, as she answered, with a candour not to be mistaken—

"I never even heard of them; but there is something connected with the name of the place and of its late owner that rather perplexes me—it is a strange coincidence; I cannot explain it; but it relates to my father, not to myself."

"Your father! You have a father then?"

"No," she replied, the tears starting to her eyes—"he died only a few weeks since."

A few weeks since! Then it was his fu-

neral he had seen—and she was really the identical mourner of his waking thoughts and nightly dreams.

“So lately?” he said, in a voice so soft and compassionate that it impelled her to turn her eyes to his with a grateful smile, and he could scarcely refrain from taking her hand; but he did refrain, and went on to say—

“It must have been about the time that the death of Sir Lyttleton took place. I attended his funeral three weeks ago last Tuesday.”

“It was the same day that my father was buried,” said Miriam, unable longer to restrain her tears, which began to flow so freely that Alfred arose in some confusion:

“Pray pardon me, Miss Bell; I have unintentionally awakened a painful retrospection. Believe me, I did not mean to distress you; indeed, I am very, very sorry.”

And he walked away towards the children, while Miriam endeavoured to regain her composure, and had pretty well suc-

ceeded when he returned, leading the two little girls, who were in great glee because he had tossed the ball against each of them, and lost to both.

"Now you have quite tired me out," he said, "so I must sit down and rest a little while. I wish you would run and gather me a few flowers in the other garden."

Again left alone with Miriam, he ventured to ask how she had become known to his sister.

"It was through the kindness of Mr. Thornton," she replied. "He attended my father in his last illness, and recommended me to the notice of Mrs. Keith, who, I believe, was commissioned by Lady Wilsden to engage a governess for her little girls."

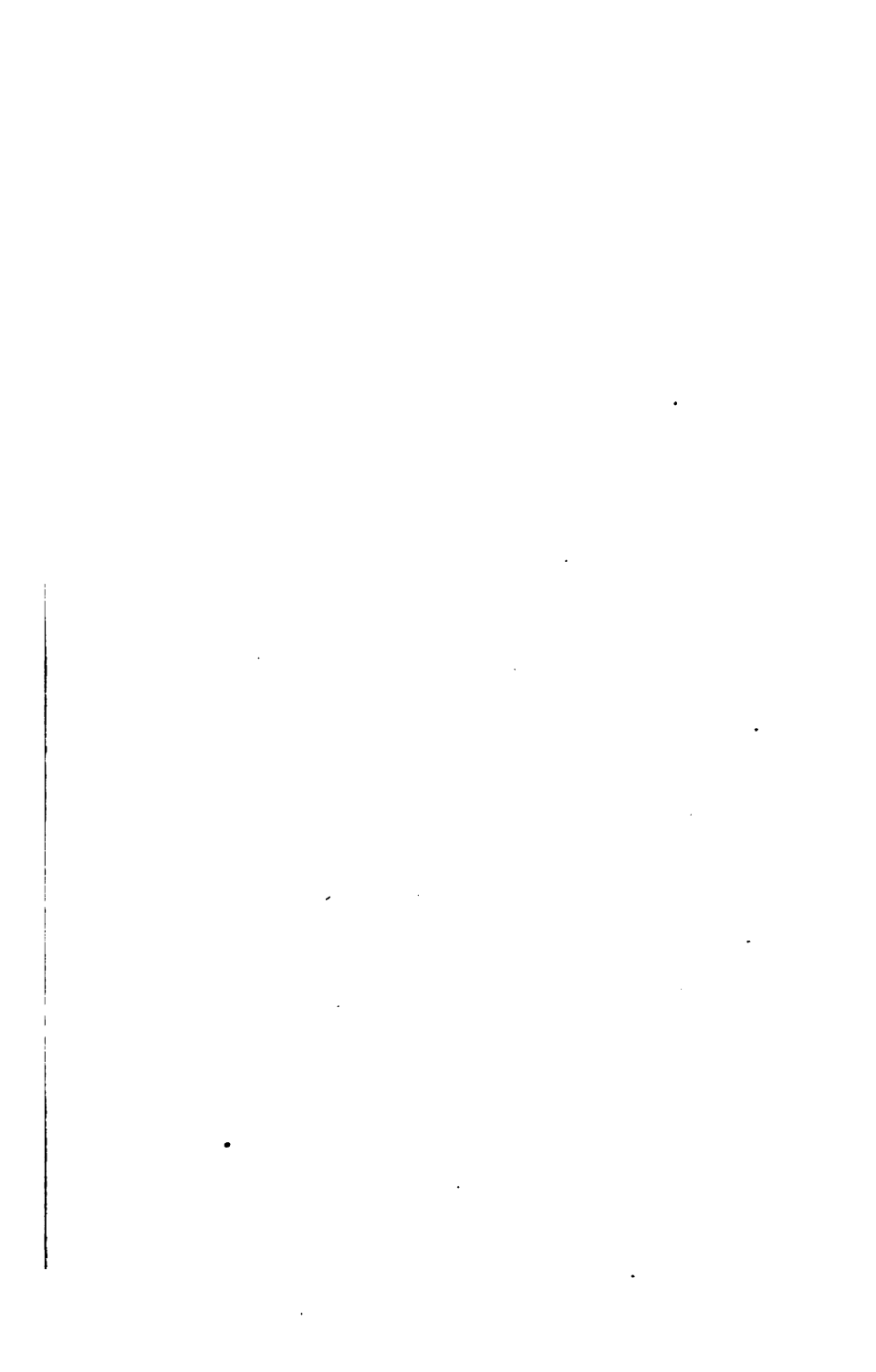
"Thornton!—ah!—yes!—he is Mrs. Keith's medical man, I think. What sort of a man is he?"

"One of the best and most benevolent. I have, indeed, so much to be grateful to him for, that anything I could say in his praise would be far short of what I feel; and, as a

doctor, I believe he is thought very highly of."

This was enough for Mr. Ballantine. He had obtained the clue he wanted, and mentally resolving to see Mr. Thornton without delay, he turned the conversation into another channel.

END OF VOL I.



MR. NEWBY'S NEW BOOKS.

THE LEBANON AND ITS LIFE:
a HISTORY and a DIARY. By DAVID URQUHART,
Esq., Author of 'The Pillars of Hercules,' 'Turkey and
its Resources,' 'The Spirit of the East,' &c.

FROM EVE TILL MORN IN EUROPE.
By Mrs. AGAR.

"A very interesting, instructive, and fascinating volume."

Examiner.

"The excellence of Mrs. Agar's judgment is shown in the method she has adopted in the treatment of a most important page of the great book of history, and the capacity of her talent is evidenced in the skill she displays in the realization of her plan."

Daily Telegraph.

"Mrs. Agar will be rewarded both with praise and a gratifying sense of usefulness, for she has brought to the accomplishment of her task an amount of reading that almost merits the name of erudition."—*Athenæum.*

IS IT PEACE, JEHU? or Bonapartism.
By AN EX-CABINET MINISTER. 1 vol. 1s. 6d.

"The book is well worthy attention."—*Express.*

THE MAN OF DESTINY. By the
Author of 'The Chronicles of the Bastile.' 2 vols. 21s.

"The plot is bold, spirited, ingenious and dramatic, and the entire book is written with an ease and ability which carries the reader on with an increasing sense of pleasure."—*Morning Post.*

"An admirably written book."—*China Express.*

"'The Man of Destiny' is perhaps more entertaining than the other works which have emanated from the same pen."

Morning Star.



MR. NEWBY'S NEW BOOKS.

MARRIED, or NOT MARRIED.
3 vols. 31s. 6d.

DAUGHTERS OF MERVILLE.
1 vol. 10s. 6d.

COUNTRY LANDLORDS. 3 vols.

AGNES ARNOLD. By W. B. M'Cabe,
Author of 'The Catholic History of England,' &c. 3 vols.
31s. 6d.

TACITA TACIT. By the Author of
"The Young Doctor," 'Sir Arthur Bouverie,' 'Lady
Granard's Nieces,' &c. 2 vols. 21s.

A STRONG WILL AND A FAIR TIDE.
By MISS STERNE, Author of 'My Village Neigh-
bours.' 3 vols. 31s. 6d.

T. C. NEWBY,
80, WELBECK STREET, CAVENDISH SQUARE.

